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GRIFFITH GAUNT;

OR,

JEALOUSY.

BY

CHARLES READE,

AUTHOR OF

"HARD CASH," "PEG WOFFINGTON," "CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE," "NEVER TOO LATE
TO MEND," "LOVE ME LITTLE, LOVE ME LONG," &c.

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
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GRIFFITH GAUNT; OR, JEALOUSY.

CHAPTER I.

"THEN I say, once for all, that priest shall never darken my doors again."

"Then I say they are my doors, and not yours, and that holy man shall brighten them whenever he will."

The gentleman and lady who faced each other pale and furious, and interchanged this bitter defiance, were man and wife, and had loved each other well.

Miss Catharine Peyton was a young lady of ancient family in Cumberland, and the most striking, but least popular, beauty in the county. She was very tall and straight, and carried herself a little too imperiously; yet she would sometimes relax and all but dissolve that haughty figure, and hang sweetly drooping over her favorites; then the contrast was delicious, and the woman fascinating.

Her hair was golden and glossy, her eyes a lovely gray; and she had a way of turning them on slowly and full, so that their victim could not fail to observe two things: first, that they were grand and beautiful orbs; secondly, that they were thoughtfully overlooking him, instead of looking at him.

So contemplated by glorious eyes, a man feels small and bitter.

Catharine was apt to receive the blunt compliments of the Cumberland squires with this sweet, celestial, superior gaze, and for this and other imperial charms was more admired than liked.

The family estate was entailed on her brother; her father spent every farthing he could; so she had no money, and no expectations, except from a distant cousin—Mr. Charlton, of Hernshaw Castle and Bolton Hall.

Even these soon dwindled. Mr. Charlton took a fancy to his late wife's relation, Griffith Gaunt, and had him into his house, and treated him as his heir. This disheartened two admirers who had hitherto sustained Catharine Peyton's gaze, and they retired. Comely girls, girls long-nosed, but rich, girls snub-nosed, but winning, married on all sides of her; but the imperial beauty remained Miss Peyton at two-and-twenty.

She was rather kind to the poor; would give them money out of her slender purse, and would even make clothes for the women, and sometimes read to them: very few of them could read to themselves in that day. All she required in return was that they should be Roman Catholics like herself, or at least pretend they might be brought to that faith by little and little.

She was a high-minded girl, and could be a womanly one—whenever she chose.

She hunted about twice a week in the season, and was at home in the saddle, for she had ridden from a child; but so ingrained was her char-

acter, that this sport which more or less unsexes most women, had no perceptible effect on her mind, nor even on her manners. The scarlet riding-habit and little purple cap, and the great white, bony horse she rode, were often seen in a good place at the end of a long run; but, for all that, the lady was a most ungenial fox-huntress. She never spoke a word but to her acquaintances, and wore a settled air of dreamy indifference, except when the hounds happened to be in full cry, and she galloping at their heels. Worse than that, when the dogs were running into the fox, and his fate certain, she had been known to rein in her struggling horse, and pace thoughtfully home, instead of coming in at the death, and claiming the brush.

One day, being complimented at the end of a hard run by the gentleman who kept the hounds, she turned her celestial orbs on him, and said,

"Nay, Sir Ralph, I love to gallop; and this sorry business gives me an excuse."

It was full a hundred years ago. The country teemed with foxes; but it abounded in stiff coverts, and a knowing fox was sure to run from one to another; and then came wearisome efforts to dislodge him; and then Miss Peyton's gray eyes used to explore vacancy, and ignore her companions, biped and quadruped.

But one day they drew Yewtree Brow, and found a stray fox. At Gaylad's first note he broke cover, and went away for home across the open country. A hedger saw him steal out, and gave a view halloo; the riders came round helter-skelter; the dogs in cover one by one threw up their noses and voices; the horns blew, the canine music swelled to a strong chorus, and away they swept across country—dogs, horses, men; and the Deuse take the hindmost!

It was a gallant chase, and our dreamy virgin's blood got up. Erect, but lithe and vigorous, and one with her great white gelding, she came flying behind the foremost riders, and took leap for leap with them. One glossy, golden curl streamed back in the rushing air; her gray eyes glowed with earthly fire; and two red spots on the upper part of her cheeks showed she was much excited, without a grain of fear. Yet in the first ten minutes one gentleman was unhorsed before her eyes, and one came to grief along with his animal, and a thorough-bred chestnut was galloping and snorting beside her with empty saddle. Presently young Featherstone, who led her by about fifteen yards, crashed through a high hedge, and was seen no more, but heard wallowing in the deep, unsuspected ditch beyond. There was no time to draw bridle. "Lie still, sir, if you please," said Catharine, with cool civility; then up rein, in spur, and she cleared the ditch and its muddy contents, alive and dead, and away without looking behind her.

On, on, on, till all the pinks and buckskins, erst so smart, were splashed with clay and dirt of every hue, and all the horses' late glossy coats were bathed with sweat and lathered with foam, and their gaping nostrils blowing and glowing red; and then it was that Harrowden Brook, swollen wide and deep by the late rains, came right between the fox and Dogmore Underwood, for which he was making.

The hunt sweeping down a hill-side caught sight of Reynard running for the brook. They made sure of him now. But he lapped a drop, and then slipped in, and soon crawled out on the other side, and made feebly for the covert, weighted with wet fur.

At sight of him the hunt hallooed and trumpeted, and came tearing on with fresh vigor.

But when they came near the brook, lo, it was twenty feet wide, and running fast and brown. Some riders skirted it, looking for a narrow part. Two horses, being spurred at it, came to the bank, and then went rearing round on their heels, depositing one hat and another rider in the current. One gallant steed planted his feet like a tower, and snorted down at the water. One flopped gravely in, and had to swim, and be dragged out. Another leaped, and landed with his feet on the other bank, his haunches in the water, and his rider curled round his neck, and glaring out between his retroverted ears.

But Miss Peyton encouraged her horse with spur and voice, set her teeth, turned rather pale this time, and went at the brook with a rush, and cleared it like a deer. She and the huntsman were almost alone together on the other side, and were as close to the dogs as the dogs were to poor Pug, when he slipped through a run in a quickset hedge, and, reducing the dogs to single file, glided into Dogmore Underwood, a stiff hazel coppice of five years' growth.

The other riders soon straggled up, and then the thing was to get him out again. There were a few narrow roads cut in the underwood; and up and down these the huntsman and whipper-in went trotting, and encouraged the stanch hounds, and whipped the skulkers back into covert. Others galloped uselessly about, pounding the earth, for daisy-cutters were few in those days; and Miss Peyton relapsed into the transcendental. She sat in one place, with her elbow on her knee, and her fair chin supported by two fingers, as undisturbed by the fracas of horns and voices as an equestrian statue of Diana.

She sat so still and so long at a corner of the underwood that at last the harassed fox stole out close to her with lolling tongue and eye askant, and took the open field again. She thrilled at first sight of him, and her cheeks burned; but her quick eye took in all the signs of his distress, and she sat quiet, and watched him coolly. Not so her horse. He plunged, and then trembled all over, and planted his fore feet together at this angle, and parted his hind legs a little, and so stood quivering, with cocked ears, and peeped over a low paling at the retiring quadruped, and fretted and sweated in anticipation of the gallop his long head told him was to follow. He looked a deal more statuesque than any three statues in England, and all about a creature not up to his knee. And, by-the-by, the gentlemen who carve horses in our native isle, did they ever see one—out of an omnibus? The whipper-in came by,

and found him in this gallant attitude, and suspected the truth, but, observing the rider's tranquil position, thought the fox had only popped out and then in again. However, he fell in with the huntsman, and told him Miss Peyton's gray had seen something. The hounds appeared puzzled; and so the huntsman rode round to Miss Peyton, and, touching his cap, asked her if she had seen nothing of the fox.

She looked him dreamily in the face.

"The fox?" she said; "he broke cover ten minutes ago."

The man blew his horn lustily, and then asked her reproachfully why she had not tally-hoed him, or winded her horn: with that he blew his own impatiently.

Miss Peyton replied, very slowly and pensively, that the fox had come out soiled and fatigued, and trailing his brush. "I looked at him," said she, "and I pitied him. He was one, and we are many; he was so little, and we are so big; *he had given us a good gallop*, and so I made up my mind he should live to run another day."

The huntsman stared stupidly at her for a moment, then burst into a torrent of oaths, then blew his horn till it was hoarse, then cursed and swore till he was hoarse himself, then to his horn again, and dogs and men came rushing to the sound.

"Couple up, and go home to supper," said Miss Peyton, quietly. "The fox is half way to Gallowstree Gorse; and you won't get him out of that this afternoon, I promise you."

As she said this, she touched her horse with the spur, leaped the low hedge in front of her, and cantered slowly home across the country. She was one that seldom troubled the hard road, go where she would.

She had ridden about a mile, when she heard a horse's feet behind her. She smiled, and her color rose a little; but she cantered on.

"Halt, in the king's name!" shouted a mellow voice; and a gentleman galloped up to her side, and reined in his mare.

"What! have they killed?" inquired Catharine, demurely.

"Not they; he is in the middle of Gallowstree Gorse by now."

"And this is the way to Gallowstree Gorse?"

"Nay, mistress," said the young man; "but when the fox heads one way and the deer another, what is a poor hunter to do?"

"Follow the slower, it seems."

"Say the lovelier and the dearer, sweet Kate."

"Now, Griffith, you know I hate flattery," said Kate; and the next moment came a soft smile, and belied this unsocial sentiment.

"Flattery?" said the lover. "I have no tongue to speak half your praises. I think the people in this country are as blind as bats, or they'd—"

"All except Mr. Griffith Gaunt; *he* has found a paragon, where wiser people see a wayward, capricious girl."

"Then *he* is the man for you. Don't you see that, mistress?"

"No, I don't quite see that," said the lady, dryly.

This cavalier reply caused a dismay the speaker never intended. The fact is, Mr. George Neville, young, handsome, and rich, had lately settled in the neighborhood, and had been greatly

smitten with Kate. The county was talking about it, and Griffith had been secretly on thorns for some days past. And now he could hide his uneasiness no longer; he cried out, in a sharp, trembling voice,

"Why, Kate, my dear Kate! what! could you love any man but me? Could you be so cruel? could you? There, let me get off my horse, and lie down on this stubble, and you ride over me, and trample me to death. I would rather have you trample on my ribs than on my heart, with loving any one but me."

"Why, what now?" said Catharine, drawing herself up; "I must scold you handsomely;" and she drew rein and turned full upon him; but by this means she saw his face was full of real distress; so, instead of reprimanding him, she said, gently, "Why, Griffith, what is to do? Are you not my servant? Do not I send you word whenever I dine from home?"

"Yes, dearest; and then I call at that house, and stick there till they guess what I would be at, and ask me too."

Catharine smiled, and proceeded to remind him that thrice a week she permitted him to ride over from Bolton (a distance of fifteen miles) to see her.

"Yes," replied Griffith, "and I must say you always come, wet or dry, to the shrubbery-gate, and put your hand in mine a minute. And, Kate," said he, piteously, "at the bare thought of your putting that same dear hand in another man's, my heart turns sick within me, and my skin burns and trembles on me."

"But you have no cause," said Catharine, soothingly. "Nobody, except yourself, doubts my affection for you. You are often thrown in my teeth, Griffith—and" (clenching her own) "I like you all the better, of course."

Griffith replied with a burst of gratitude; and then, as men will, proceeded to encroach.

"Ah!" said he, "if you would but pluck up courage, and take the matrimonial fence with me at once."

Miss Peyton sighed at that, and drooped a little upon her saddle. After a pause, she enumerated the "just impediments." She reminded him that neither of them had means to marry on.

He made light of that; he should have plenty; Mr. Charlton has as good as told him he was to have Bolton Hall and Grange: "Six hundred acres, Kate, besides the park and paddocks."

In his warmth he forgot that Catharine was to have been Mr. Charlton's heir. Catharine was too high-minded to bear Griffith any grudge; but she colored a little, and said she was averse to come to him a penniless bride.

"Why, what matters it which of us has the dress, so that there is enough for both?" said Griffith, with an air of astonishment.

Catharine smiled approbation, and tacitly yielded that point. But then she objected the difference in their faith.

"Oh, honest folk get to heaven by different roads," said Griffith, carelessly.

"I have been taught otherwise," replied Catharine, gravely.

"Then give me your hand and I'll give you my soul," said Griffith Gaunt, impetuously. "I'll go to heaven your way, if you can't go

mine. Any thing sooner than be parted in this world or the next."

She looked at him in silence; and it was in a faint, half apologetic tone she objected that all her kinsfolk were set against it.

"It is not their business—it is ours," was the prompt reply.

"Well, then," said Catharine, sadly, "I suppose I must tell you the true reason: I feel I should not make you happy; I do not love you quite as you want to be loved—as you deserve to be loved. You need not look so; nothing in flesh and blood is your rival. But my heart bleeds for the Church; I think of her ancient glory in this kingdom, and, when I see her present condition, I long to devote myself to her service. I am very fit to be an abbess or a nun—most unfit to be a wife. No, no—I must not, ought not, dare not, marry a Protestant. Take the advice of one who esteems you dearly; leave me—fly from me—forget me—do every thing but hate me. Nay, do not hate me; you little know the struggle in my mind. Farewell; the saints, whom you scorn, watch over and protect you! Farewell!"

And with this she sighed, and struck her spur into the gray, and he darted off at a gallop.

Griffith, little able to cope with such a character as this, sat petrified, and would have been rooted to the spot if he had happened to be on foot. But his mare set off after her companion, and a chase of a novel kind commenced. Catharine's horse was fresher than Griffith's mare, and the latter, not being urged by her petrified master, lost ground.

But when she drew near to her father's gate, Catharine relaxed her speed, and Griffith rejoined her.

She had already half relented, and only wanted a warm and resolute wooer to bring her round. But Griffith was too sore, and too little versed in woman. Full of suspicion and bitterness, he paced gloomy and silent by her side till they reached the great avenue that led to her father's house.

And while ha rides alongside the capricious creature in sulky silence, I may as well reveal a certain foible in his own character.

This Griffith Gaunt was by no means deficient in physical courage; but he was instinctively disposed to run away from mental pain the moment he lost hope of driving it away from him. For instance, if Catharine had been ill and her life in danger, he would have ridden day and night to save her—would have begged himself to save her; but if she had died, he would either have killed himself, or else fled the country, and so escaped the sight of every object that was associated with her and could agonize him. I do not think he could have attended the funeral of one he loved.

The mind, as well as the body, has its self-protecting instincts. This of Griffith's was, after all, an instinct of that class, and, under certain circumstances, is true wisdom. But Griffith, I think, carried the instinct to excess; and that is why I call it his foible.

"Catharine," said he, resolutely, "let me ride by your side to the house for once; for I read your advice my own way, and I mean to follow it: after to-day you will be troubled with me no more. I have loved you these three years, I

have courted you these two years, and I am none the nearer; I see I am not the man you mean to marry; so I shall do as my father did, ride down to the coast, and sell my horse, and ship for foreign parts."

"Oh, as you will," said Catharine, haughtily: she quite forgot she had just recommended him to do something of this very kind.

Presently she stole a look. His fine ruddy cheek was pale; his manly brown eyes were moist; yet a gloomy and resolute expression on his tight-drawn lips. She looked at him sideways, and thought how often he had ridden thirty miles on that very mare to get a word with her at the shrubby-gate. And now the mare to be sold! The man to go broken-hearted to sea—perhaps to his death! Her good heart began to yearn.

"Griffith," said she, softly, "it is not as if I were going to wed any body else. Is it nothing to be preferred by her you say you love? If I were you, I would do nothing rash. Why not give me a little time? In truth, I hardly know my own mind about it two days together."

"Kate," said the young man, firmly, "I am courting you this two years. If I wait two years more, it will be but to see the right man come and carry you in a month; for so girls are won, when they are won at all. Your sister that is married and dead, she held Josh Pitt in hand for years; and what is the upshot? Why, he wears the willow for her to this day; and her husband married again, before her grave was green. Nay, I have done all an honest man can to woo you; so take me now, or let me go."

At this, Kate began to waver secretly, and ask herself whether it would not be better to yield, since he was so abominably resolute.

But the unlucky fellow did not leave well alone. He went on to say,

"Once out of sight of this place, I may cure myself of my fancy. Here I never could."

"Oh," said Catharine, directly, "if you are so bent on being cured, it would not become me to say nay."

Griffith Gaunt bit his lip and hung his head, and made no reply.

The patience with which he received her hard speech was more apparent than real; but it told. Catharine, receiving no fresh provocation, relented again of her own accord, and, after a considerable silence, whispered, softly,

"Think how we should all miss you."

Here was an overture to reconciliation. But, unfortunately, it brought out what had long been rankling in Griffith's mind, and was, in fact, the real cause of the misunderstanding.

"Oh," said he, "those I care for will soon find another to take my place! Soon? quotha. They have not waited till I was gone for that."

"Ah, indeed!" said Catharine, with some surprise; then, like the quick-witted girl she was, "so this is what all the coil is about."

She then, with a charming smile, begged him to inform her who was his destined successor in her esteem. Griffith colored purple at her cool hypocrisy (for such he considered it), and replied, almost fiercely,

"Who but that young black-a-viséd George Neville, that you have been coquetting with this month past—and danced all night with him at Lady Munster's ball, you did."

Catharine blushed, and said, deprecatingly, "You were not there, Griffith, or to be sure I had not danced with *him*."

"And he toasts you by name, wherever he goes."

"Can I help that? Wait till I toast him, before you make yourself ridiculous, and me very angry—about nothing."

Griffith, sticking to his one idea, replied, doggedly,

"Mistress Alice Peyton shilly-shallied with her true lover for years, till Richard Hilton came, that was not fit to tie his shoes; and then—"

Catharine cut him short,

"Affront me, if nothing less will serve; but spare my sister in her grave."

She began the sentence angrily, but concluded it in a broken voice. Griffith was half disarmed; but only half. He answered, sullenly,

"She did not die till she had jilted an honest gentleman and broken his heart, and married a sot, to her cost. And you are of her breed, when all is done; and now that young coxcomb has come, like Dick Hilton, between you and me."

"But I do not encourage him."

"You do not *discourage* him," retorted Griffith, "or he would not be so hot after you. Were you ever the woman to say, 'I have a servant already that loves me dear?' That one frank word had sent him packing."

Miss Peyton colored, and the water came into her eyes.

"I may have been imprudent," she murmured.

"The young gentleman made me smile with his extravagance. I never thought to be misunderstood by him, far less by you." Then, suddenly, as bold as brass, "It's all your fault; if he had the power to make you uneasy, why did you not check me before?"

"Ay, forsooth, and have it cast in my teeth I was a jealous monster, and played the tyrant before my time. A poor fellow scarce knows what to be at that loves a coquette."

"Coquette I am none," replied the lady, bridling magnificently.

Griffith took no notice of this interruption. He proceeded to say that he had hitherto endured this intrusion of a rival in silence, though with a sore heart, hoping his patience might touch her, or the fire go out of itself. But at last, unable to bear it any longer in silence, he had shown his wound to one he knew could feel for him, his poor friend Pitt. Pitt had then let him know that his own mistake had been over-confidence in Alice Peyton's constancy.

"He said to me, 'Watch your Kate close, and, at the first blush of a rival, say you to her, Part with him, or part with me.'"

Catharine pinned him directly.

"And this is how you take Joshua Pitt's advice—by offering to run away from this sorry rival."

The shrewd reply, and a curl of the lip, half arch, half contemptuous, that accompanied the thrust, staggered the less ready Griffith. He got puzzled, and showed it.

"Well, but," stammered he at last, "your spirit is high; I was mostly afraid to put it so plump to you. So I thought I would go about a bit. However, it comes to the same thing; for this I do know—that, if you refuse me your hand

this day, it is to give it to a new acquaintance, as your Alice did before you. And if it is to be so, 'tis best for me to be gone: best for *him*, and best for you. You don't know me, Kate; for, as clever as you are, at the thought of your playing me false, after all these years, and marrying that George Neville, my heart turns to ice, and then to fire, and my head seems ready to burst, and my hands to do mad and bloody acts. Ay, I feel I should kill him, or you, or both, at the church-porch. Ah!"

He suddenly griped her arm, and at the same time involuntarily checked his mare.

Both horses stopped.

She raised her head with an inquiring look, and saw her lover's face discolored with passion, and so strangely convulsed that she feared at first he was in a fit, or stricken with death or palsy.

She uttered a cry of alarm, and stretched forth her hand toward him.

But the next moment she drew it back from him; for, following his eye, she discerned the cause of his ghastly look. Her father's house stood at the end of the avenue they had just entered; but there was another approach to it, namely, by a bridle-road at right angles to the avenue or main entrance, and up that bridle-road a gentleman was walking his horse, and bid fair to meet them at the hall door.

It was young Neville. There was no mistaking his piebald charger for any other animal in that county.

Kate Peyton glanced from lover to lover, and shuddered at Griffith. She was familiar with petty jealousy; she had even detected it pinching or coloring many a pretty face that tried very hard to hide it all the time. But that was nothing to what she saw now: hitherto she had but beheld the feeling of jealousy; but now she witnessed the livid passion of jealousy writhing in every lineament of a human face. That terrible passion had transfigured its victim in a moment: the ruddy, genial, kindly Griffith, with his soft brown eye, was gone, and in his place lowered a face older, and discolored, and convulsed, and almost demoniacal.

Women (wiser, perhaps, in this than men) take their strongest impressions by the eye, not ear. Catharine, I say, looked at him she had hitherto thought she knew—looked and feared him. And even while she looked and shuddered, Griffith spurred his mare sharply, and then drew her head across the gray gelding's path. It was an instinctive impulse to bar the lady he loved from taking another step toward the place where his rival awaited her.

"I can not bear it," he gasped. "Choose you now, once for all, between that puppy there and me;" and he pointed with his riding-whip at his rival, and waited with his teeth clenched for her decision.

The movement was rapid, the gesture large and commanding, and the words manly; for what says the fighting poet?

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who fears to put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all."

CHAPTER II.

MISS PEYTON drew herself up and back by one motion, like a queen at bay; but still she eyed him with a certain respect, and was careful now not to provoke nor pain him needlessly.

"I prefer *you*—though you speak harshly to me sir," said she, with gentle dignity.

"Then give me your hand, with *that man* in sight, and end my torments; promise to marry me this very week. Ah! Kate, have pity on your poor, faithful servant, who has loved you so long!"

"I do, Griffith, I do," said she, sweetly; "but I shall never marry now. Only set your mind at rest about Mr. Neville there. He has never asked me, for one thing."

"He soon will, then."

"No, no; I declare I will be very cool to him, after what you have said to me. But I can not marry you, neither. I dare not. Listen to me, and do, pray, govern your temper, as I am doing mine. I have often read of men with a passion for jealousy—I mean, men whose jealousy feeds upon air, and defies reason. I know you now for such a man. Marriage would not cure this madness; for wives do not escape admiration any more than maids. Something tells me you would be jealous of every fool that paid me some stale compliment, jealous of my female friends, and jealous of my relations, and perhaps jealous of your own children, and of that holy, persecuted Church which must still have a large share of *my* heart. No, no; your face and your words have shown me a precipice. I tremble and draw back, and now I never *will* marry at all: from this day I give myself to the Church."

Griffith did not believe one word of all this.

"That is your answer to me," said he, bitterly. "When the right man puts the question (and he is not far off) you will tell another tale. You take me for a fool, and you mock me; you are not the lass to die an old maid, and men are not the fools to let you. With faces like yours, the new servant comes before the old one is gone. Well, I have got my answer. County Cumberland, you are no place for me! The ways and the fields we two have ridden together—oh, how could I bear their sight without my dear? Why, what a poor-spirited fool I am to stay and whine! Come, mistress, your lover waits you there, and your discarded servant knows good-breeding: he leaves the country not to spoil your sport."

Catharine panted heavily.

"Well, sir," said she, "then it is your doing, not mine. Will you not even shake hands with me, Griffith?"

"I were a brute else," sighed the jealous one, with a sudden revulsion of feeling. "I have spent the happiest hours of my life beside you. If I loved thee less, I had never left thee."

He clung a little while to her hands, more like a drowning man than any thing else, then let them go, and suddenly shook his clenched fist in the direction of George Neville, and cried out with a savage yell,

"My curse on him that parts us twain! And you, Kate, may God bless you single, and curse you married! And that is my last word in Cumberland."

"Amen!" said Catharine, resignedly.

And even with this they wheeled their horses

apart, and rode away from each other: she very pale, but erect with wounded pride; he reeling in his saddle like a drunken man.

And so Griffith Gaunt, stung mad by jealousy, affronted his sweetheart, the proudest girl in Cumberland, and, yielding to his foible, fled from his pain.

Our foibles are our manias.

CHAPTER III.

MISS PEYTON was shocked and grieved; but she was affronted and wounded. Now anger seems to have some fine buoyant quality, which makes it rise and come uppermost in an agitated mind. She rode proudly into the court-yard of her father's house, and would not look once behind to see the last of her perverse lover.

The old groom, Joe, who had taught her to ride when she was six years old, saw her coming, and hobbled out to hold her horse while she alighted.

"*Mistress Kate,*" said he, "*have you seen Master Griffith Gaunt any wheres?*"

The young lady colored at this question.

"*Why?*" said she.

"*Why?*" repeated Old Joe, a little contemptuously. "*Why, where have you been not to know the country is out after un? First comed Jock Dennet, with his horse all in a lather, to say old Mr. Charlton was took ill, and had asked for Master Griffith. I told him to go to Dogmore Copse: 'Our Kate is a-hunting to-day,' says I; 'and your Griffith, he is sure not to be far from her gelding's tail;' a sticks in his spurs and away a goes. What, ha'n't you seen Jock, neither?*"

"*No, no,*" replied Miss Peyton, impatiently. "*What, is there any thing the matter?*"

"*The matter, quo' she! Why, Jock hadn't been gone an hour when in rides the new footman all in a lather, and brings a letter for Master Griffith from the old gentleman's house-keeper. 'You leave the letter with me, in case,' says I, and I sends him a-field after t'other. Here be the letter.*"

He took off his cap and produced the letter.

Catharine started at the sight of it.

"*Alack!*" said she, "*this is a heavy day. Look, Joe; sealed with black. Poor Cousin Charlton! I doubt he is no more.*"

Joe shook his head expressively, and told her the butcher had come from that part not ten minutes ago, with word that the blinds were all down at Bolton Hall.

Poor human nature! A gleam of joy shot through Catharine's heart; this sad news would compel Griffith to stay at home and bury his benefactor; and that delay would give him time to reflect; and, somehow or other, she felt sure it would end in his not going at all.

But these thoughts had no sooner passed through her than she was ashamed of them and of herself. What! welcome that poor old man's death because it would keep her cross-grained lover at home? Her cheeks burned with shame; and, with a superfluous exercise of self-defense, she retired from Old Joe, lest he should divine what was passing in her mind.

But she was so rapt in thought that she carried the letter away with her unconsciously.

As she passed through the hall, she heard George Neville and her father in animated conversation. She mounted the stairs softly, and went into a little boudoir of her own on the first floor, and sat down. The house stood high, and there was a very expansive and beautiful view of the country from this window. She sat down by it and drooped, and looked wistfully through the window, and thought of the past, and fell into a sad reverie. Pity began to soften her pride and anger, and presently two gentle tears dimmed her glorious eyes a moment, then stole down her delicate cheeks.

While she sat thus lost in the past, jovial voices and creaking boots broke suddenly upon her ear, and came up the stairs; they jarred upon her; so she cast one last glance out of the window, and rose to get out of their way, if possible. But it was too late; a heavy step came to the door, and a ruddy, Port-drinking face peeped in. It was her father.

"*See-ho!*" roared the jovial squire. "*I've found the hare on her form; bide thou outside a moment.*"

And he entered the room; but he had no sooner closed the door than his whole manner changed from loud and jovial to agitated and subdued.

"*Kate, my girl,*" said he, piteously, "*I have been a bad father to thee. I have spent all the money that should have been thine; thy poor father can scarce look thee in the face. So now I bring thee a good husband; be a good child now, and a dutiful. Neville's Court is his, and Neville's Cross will be, by the entail; and so will the baronetcy. I shall see my girl Lady Neville.*"

"*Never, papa, never!*" cried Kate.

"*Hush! hush!*" said the squire, and put up his hand to her in great agitation and alarm; "*hush, or he will hear ye. Kate,*" he whispered, "*are you mad? Little I thought, when he asked to see me, it was to offer marriage. Be a good girl now; don't you quarrel with good luck. You are not fit to be poor; and you have made enemies: do but think how they will flout you when I die, and Bill's jade of a wife puts you to the door, as she will. And now you can triumph over them all, my Lady Neville—and make your poor father happy, my Lady Neville. Enough said, for I promised you; so don't go and make a fool of me, and yourself into the bargain. And—and—a word in your ear: he hath lent me a hundred pounds.*"

At this climax the father hung his head; the daughter winced and moaned out, "*Papa, how could you?*"

Mr. Peyton had gradually descended to that intermediate stage of degradation, when the substance of dignity is all gone, but its shadow, shame, remains. He stamped impatiently on the ground, and cut his humiliation short by rushing out of the room.

"*Here, try your own luck, youngster,*" he cried at the door. "*She knows my mind.*"

He trampled down the stairs, and young George Neville knocked respectfully at the door, though it was half open, and came in with youth's light foot, and a handsome face flushed into beauty by love and hope.

Miss Peyton's eye just swept him as he entered, and with the same movement she turned

away her fair head and blushing cheek toward the window; yet—must I own it?—she quietly moulded the letter that lay in her lap, so that the address was no longer visible to the newcomer.

(Small secrecy, verging on deceit, you are bred in woman's bones!)

This blushing and averted cheek is one of those equivocal receptions that have puzzled many a sensible man. It is a sign of coy love; it is a sign of gentle aversion; *our* mode of interpreting it is simple and judicious: whichever it happens to be, we go and take it for the other.

The brisk, bold wooer that now engaged Kate Peyton was not the man to be dashed by a woman's coyness. Handsome, daring, good-humored, and vain, he had every thing in his favor but his novelty.

Look at Kate! her eye lingers wistfully on that disconsolate horseman whose every step takes him farther from her; but George has her ear, and draws closer and closer to it, and pours love's mellow murmurs into it.

He told her he had made the grand tour, and seen the beauties of every land, but none like her; other ladies had certainly pleased his eye for a moment, but she alone had conquered his heart. He said many charming things to her, such as Griffith Gaunt had never said. Among the rest, he assured her the beauty of her person would not alone have fascinated him so deeply; but he had seen the beauty of her mind in those eyes of hers, that seemed not eyes, but souls; and, begging her pardon for his presumption, he aspired to wed her mind.

Such ideas had often risen in Kate's own mind, but to hear them from a man was new. She looked askant through the window at the lessening Griffith, and thought "how the grand tour improves a man!" and said, as coldly as she could, "I esteem you, sir, and can not but be flattered by sentiments so superior to those I am used to hear; but let this go no farther. I shall never marry now."

Instead of being angry at this, or telling her she wanted to marry somebody else, as the injudicious Griffith had done, young Neville had the address to treat it as an excellent jest, and drew such comical pictures of all the old maids in the neighborhood that she could not help smiling.

But the moment she smiled, the inflammable George made hot love to her again. Then she besought him to leave her, piteously. Then he said, cheerfully, he would leave her as soon as ever she had promised to be his. At that she turned sullen and haughty, and looked through the window and took no notice of him whatever. Then, instead of being discouraged or mortified, he showed imperturbable confidence and good-humor, and begged archly to know what interesting object was in sight from that window. On this she blushed and withdrew her eyes from the window, and so they met his. On that he threw himself on his knees (custom of the day), and wooed her with such a burst of passionate and tearful eloquence that she began to pity him, and said, lifting her lovely eyes,

"Alas! I was born to make all those I esteem unhappy!" and she sighed deeply.

"Not a bit of it," said he; "you were born, like the sun, to bless all you shine upon. Sweet

Miss Kate, I love you as these country boors can never be taught to love. I lay my heart, my name, my substance, at your feet; you shall not be loved—you shall be worshiped. Ah! turn those eyes, brimful of soul, on me again, and let me try and read in them that one day, no matter how distant, the delight of my eyes, the joy of all my senses, the pride of Cumberland, the pearl of England, the flower of womankind, the rival of the angels, the darling of George Neville's heart, will be George Neville's wife."

Fire and water were in his eyes, passion in every tone; his manly hand grasped hers and trembled, and drew her gently toward him.

Her bosom heaved; his passionate male voice and touch electrified her, and made her flutter.

"Spare me this pain," she faltered; and she looked through the window and thought, "Poor Griffith was right, after all, and I was wrong. He had cause for jealousy, and CAUSE FOR FEAR."

And then she pitied him who panted at her side, and then she was sorry for him who rode away disconsolate, still lessening to her eye; and what with this conflict and the emotion her quarrel with Griffith had already caused her, she leaned her head back against the shutter, and began to sob low, but almost hysterically.

Now Mr. George Neville was neither a fool nor a novice; if he had never been downright in love before (which I crave permission to doubt), he had gone far enough on that road to make one Italian lady, two French, one Austrian, and one Creole, in love with him; and each of these love-affairs had given him fresh insight into the ways of woman. Enlightened by so many bitter-sweet experiences, he saw at once that there was something more going on inside Kate's heaving bosom than he could have caused by offering her his hand. He rose from his knees and leaned against the opposite shutter, and fixed his eyes a little sadly, but very observantly, on her, as she leaned back against the shutter, sobbing low, but hysterically, and quivering all over.

"There's some other man at the bottom of this," thought George Neville.

"Miss Kate," said he, gently, "I do not come here to make you weep. I love you like a gentleman. If you love another, take courage, tell me so, and don't let your father constrain your inclinations. Dearly as I love you, I would not wed your person, and your heart another's: that would be too cruel to you, and!" (drawing himself up with sudden majesty) "too unjust to myself."

Kate looked up at him through her tears, and admired this man, who could love ardently, yet be proud and just. And if this appeal to her candor had been made yesterday, she would have said, frankly, "There is one I—esteem." But, since the quarrel, she would not own to herself, far less to another, that she loved a man who had turned his back upon her. So she *parried*.

"There is no one I love enough to wed," said she. "I am a cold-hearted girl, born to give pain to my betters. But I shall do something desperate to end all this."

"All what?" said he, keenly.

"The whole thing: my unprofitable life."

"Miss Kate," said Neville, "I asked you, was there another man. If you had answered me, 'In truth there is, but he is poor and my

father is averse or the like,' then I would have secretly sought that man, and, as I am very rich, you should have been happy."

"Oh, Mr. Neville, that is very generous, but how meanly you must think of me!"

"And what a bungler you must think me! I tell you, you should never have known. But let that pass; you have answered my question; and you say there is no man you love. Then I say you shall be Dame Neville."

"What, whether I will or no?"

"Yes; whether you *think* you will or no."

Catharine turned her dreamy eyes on him.

"You have had a good master. Why did you not come to me sooner?"

She was thinking more of him than of herself, and, in fact, paying too little heed to her words. But she had no sooner uttered this inadvertent speech than she felt she had said too much. She blushed rosy red, and hid her face in her hands in the most charming confusion.

"Sweetest, it is not an hour too late, as you do not love another," was stout George Neville's reply.

But nevertheless the cunning rogue thought it safest to temporize, and put his coy mistress off her guard. So he ceased to alarm her by pressing the question of marriage, but seduced her into a charming talk, where the topics were not so personal, and only the tones of his voice and the glances of his expressive eyes were caressing. He was on his mettle to please her by hook or by crook, and was delightful, irresistible. He set her at ease, and she began to listen more, and even to smile faintly, and to look through the window a little less perseveringly.

Suddenly the spell was broken for a while.

And by whom?

By the other.

Ay, you may well stare. It sounds strange, but it is true, that the poor forlorn horseman, hanging like a broken man, as he was, over his tired horse, and wending his solitary way from her he loved, and resigning the field, like a goose, to the very rival he feared, did yet (like the retiring Parthian) shoot an arrow into that pretty boudoir and hit both his sweetheart and his rival—hit them hard enough to spoil their sport, and make a little mischief between them—for that afternoon, at all events.

The arrow came into the room after this fashion.

Kate was sitting in a very feminine attitude. When a man wants to look in any direction, he turns his body and his eye the same way, and does it; but women love to cast oblique regards; and this their instinct is a fruitful source of their graceful and characteristic postures.

Kate Peyton was at this moment a statue of her sex. Her fair head leaned gently back against the corner of the window-shutter; her pretty feet and fair person in general were opposite George Neville, who sat facing the window, but in the middle of the room; her arms, half pendent, half extended, went listlessly aslant her, and somewhat to the right of her knees, yet, by an exquisite turn of the neck, her gray eyes contrived to be looking dreamily out of the window to her left. Still, in this figure, that pointed one way and looked another, there was no distortion; all was easy, and full of that subtle grace we artists call repose.

But suddenly she dissolved this feminine attitude, rose to her feet, and interrupted her wooer civilly.

"Excuse me," said she; "but can you tell me which way that road on the hill leads to?"

Her companion stared a little at so sudden a turn in the conversation, but replied by asking her, with perfect good-humor, what road she meant.

"The one that gentleman on horseback has just taken. Surely," she continued, "that road does not take to Bolton Hall."

"Certainly not," said George, following the direction of her finger. "Bolton Hall lies to the right. That road takes to the sea-coast by Otterbury and Stanhope."

"I thought so," said Kate. "How unfortunate! He can not know; but, indeed, how should he?"

"Who can not know? and what? You speak in riddles, mistress. And how pale you are! Are you ill?"

"No, not ill, sir," faltered Kate, "but you see me much discomposed. My cousin Charlton died this day, and the news met me at the very door." She could say no more.

Mr. Neville, on hearing this news, began to make many excuses for having inadvertently intruded himself upon her on such a day; but, in the midst of his apologies, she suddenly looked him full in the face, and said, with nervous abruptness,

"You talk like a *preux chevalier*. I wonder whether you would ride five or six miles to do me a service."

"Ay, a thousand!" said the young man, glowing with pleasure. "What is to do?"

Kate pointed through the window.

"You see that gentleman on horseback. Well, I happen to know that he is leaving the country; he thinks that he—that I—that Mr. Charlton has many years to live. He must be told Mr. Charlton is dead, and his presence is required at Bolton Hall. I *should* like somebody to gallop after him, and give him this letter; but my own horse is tired, and I am tired; and, to be frank, there is a little coolness between the gentleman himself and me. Oh, I wish him no ill, but really I am not upon terms—I do not feel complaisant enough to carry a letter after him; yet I do feel that he *must* have it. Do not you think it would be malicious and unworthy in me to keep the news from him, when I know it is so?"

Young Neville smiled.

"Nay, mistress, why so many words? Give me your letter, and I will soon overtake the gentleman: he seems in no great hurry."

Kate thanked him, and made a polite apology for giving him so much trouble, and handed him the letter. When it came to that, she held it out to him rather irresolutely; but he took it promptly, and bowed low, after the fashion of the day. She courtesied; he marched off with alacrity. She sat down again, and put her head in her hand to think it all over, and a chill thought ran through her. Was her conduct wise? What would Griffith think at her employing his rival? Would he not infer Neville had entered her service in more senses than one? Perhaps he would throw the letter in the dirt in a rage, and never read it.

Steps came rapidly, the door opened, and there

was George Neville again, but not the same George Neville that went out but thirty seconds before. He stood in the door looking very black, and with a sardonic smile on his lips.

"An excellent jest, mistress!" said he, ironically.

"Why, what is the matter?" said the lady, stoutly; but her red cheeks belied her assumption of innocence.

"Oh, not much," said George, with a bitter sneer. "It is an old story; only I thought you were nobler than the rest of your sex. This letter is to Mr. Griffith Gaunt."

"Well, sir!" said Kate, with a face of serene and candid innocence.

"And Mr. Griffith Gaunt is a suitor of yours."

"Say *was*. He is so no longer. He and I are out. But for that, think you I had even listened to—what you have been saying to me this ever so long?"

"Oh, that alters the case," said George. "But stay!" and he knitted his brows and reflected.

Up to a moment ago, the loftiness of Catharine Peyton's demeanor, and the celestial something in her soul-like, dreamy eyes, had convinced him she was a creature free from the small dishonesty and lubricity he had noted in so many women otherwise amiable and good. But this business of the letter had shaken the illusion.

"Stay!" said he, stiffly. "You say Mr. Gaunt and you are out?"

Catharine assented by a movement of her fair head.

"And he is leaving the country. Perhaps this letter is to keep him from leaving the country."

"Only until he has buried his benefactor," murmured Kate, in deprecating accents.

George wore a bitter sneer at this.

"Mistress Kate," said he, after a significant pause, "do you read Molière?"

She bridled a little, and would not reply. She knew Molière quite well enough not to want his wit leveled at her head.

"Do you admire the character of C  lim  ne?" No reply.

"You do not. How can you? She was too much your inferior. She never sent one of her lovers with a letter to the other to stop his flight. Well, you may eclipse C  lim  ne; but permit me to remind you that I am George Neville, and not Georges Dandin."

Miss Peyton rose from her seat with eyes that literally flashed fire; and—the horrible truth must be told—her first wild impulse was to reply to all this Moli  re with one cut of her little riding-whip. But she had a swift mind, and two reflections entered it together: first, that this would be unlike a gentlewoman; secondly, that if she whipped Mr. Neville, however inefficaciously, he would not lend her his piebald horse. So she took stronger measures; she just sank down again, and filtered,

"I do not understand these bitter words. I have no lover at all; I never will have one again. But it is hard to think I can not make a friend nor keep a friend"—and so lifted up her hands, and began to cry piteously.

Then the stout George was taken aback, and made to think himself a ruffian.

"Nay, do not weep so, Mistress Kate," said he, hurriedly. "Come, take courage. I am not jealous of Mr. Gaunt—a man that hath been two years dangling after you, and could not win you. I look but to my own self-respect in the matter. I know your sex better than you know yourselves. Were I to carry that letter, you would thank me now, but by-and-by despise me. Now, as I mean you to be my wife, I will not risk your contempt. Why not take my horse, put whom you like upon him, and so convey the letter to Mr. Gaunt?"

Now this was all the fair mourner wanted; so she said,

"No, no, she would not be beholden to him for any thing; he had spoken harshly to her, and misjudged her cruelly, cruelly—oh! oh! oh!"

Then he implored her to grant him this small favor; then she cleared up, and said, "Well, sooner than bear malice, she would." He thanked her for granting him that favor. She went off with the letter, saying,

"I will be back anon."

But once she got clear, she opened the door again, and peeped in at him gayly, and said she,

"Why not ask me who *wrote* the letter, before you compared me to that French coquette?" and, with this, made him an arch courtesy and tripped away.

Mr. George Neville opened his eyes with astonishment. This arch question, and Kate's manner of putting it, convinced him the obnoxious missive was not a love-letter at all. He was sorry now, and vexed with himself for having called her a coquette, and made her cry. After all, what was the mighty favor she had asked of him? To carry a sealed letter from somebody or other to a person who, to be sure, had been her lover, but was so no longer—a simple act of charity and civility; and he had refused it in injurious terms.

He was glad he had lent his horse, and almost sorry he had not taken the letter himself.

To these chivalrous self-reproaches succeeded an uneasy feeling that perhaps the lady might retaliate somehow. It struck him, on reflection, that the arch query she had let fly at him was accompanied with a certain sparkle of the laughing eye, such as ere now had, in his experience, preceded a stroke of the feminine claw.

As he walked up and down, uneasy, awaiting the fair one's return, her father came up, and asked him to dine and sleep. What made the invitation more welcome was, that it in reality came from Kate.

"She tells me she has borrowed your horse," said the squire; "so, says she, I am bound to take care of you till daylight; and, indeed, our ways are perilous at night."

"She is an angel!" cried the lover, all his ardor revived by this unexpected trait. "My horse, my house, my hand, and my heart are all at her service, by night and day."

Mr. Peyton, to while away the time before dinner, invited him to walk out and see—a hog, deadly fat, as times went. But Neville denied himself that satisfaction, on the plea that he had his orders to await Miss Peyton's return where he was. The squire was amused at his excessive docility, and winked, as much as to say, "I have been once upon a time in your plight," and so went and gloried in his hog alone.

The lover fell into a delicious reverie. He enjoyed, by anticipation, the novel pleasure of an evening passed all alone with this charming girl. The father, being friendly to his suit, would go to sleep after dinner; and then, by the subdued light of a wood fire, he would murmur his love into that sweet ear for hours, until the averted head should come round by degrees, and the delicious lips yield a coy assent. He resolved the night should not close till he had surprised, overpowered, and secured his lovely bride.

These soft meditations reconciled him for a while to the prolonged absence of their object.

In the midst of them, he happened to glance through the window; and he saw a sight that took his very breath away, and rooted him in amazement to the spot. About a mile from the house, a lady in a scarlet habit was galloping across country as the crow flies. Hedge, ditch, or brook, nothing stopped her an instant; and as for the pace,

"She seemed in running to devour the way."

It was Kate Peyton on his piebald horse.

CHAPTER IV.

GRIFFITH GAUNT, unknown to himself, had lost temper as well as heart before he took the desperate step of leaving the country. Now his temper was naturally good; and, ere he had ridden two miles, he recovered it. To his cost; for the sustaining force of anger being gone, he was alone with his grief. He drew the rein half mechanically, and from a spirited canter declined to a walk.

And the slower he went, the chillier grew his heart, till it lay half ice, half lead, in his bosom.

Parted! oh, word pregnant with misery!

Never to see those heavenly eyes again, nor hear that silver voice! Never again to watch that peerless form walk the minuet, nor see it lift the gray horse over a fence with the grace and spirit that seemed inseparable from it!

Desolation streamed over him at the thought. And next his forlorn mind began to cling even to the inanimate objects that were dotted about the place which held her. He passed a little farm-house into which Kate and he had once been driven by a storm, and had sat together by the kitchen fire; and the farmer's wife had smiled on them for sweethearts, and made them drink rum and milk, and stay till the sun was fairly out.

"Ah! good-by, little farm!" he sighed; "when shall I ever see you again?"

He passed a brook where they had often stopped together and given their panting horses just a mouthful after a run with the harriers.

"Good-by, little brook!" said he; "you will ripple on as before, and warble as you go; but I shall never drink at your water more, nor hear your pleasant murmur with her I love."

He sighed and crept away, still making for the sea.

In the icy depression of his heart his body and his senses were half paralyzed, and none would have known the accomplished huntsman in this broken man, who hung anyhow over his mare's neck, and went to and fro in the saddle.

When he had gone about five miles he came to the crest of a hill; he remembered that, once

past that brow, he could see Peyton Hall no more. He turned slowly and cast a sorrowful look at it.

It was winter, but the afternoon sun had come out bright. The horizontal beams struck full upon the house, and all the western panes shone like burnished gold. Her very abode, how glorious it looked! And he was to see it no more.

He gazed and gazed at the bright house till love and sorrow dimmed his eyes, and he could see the beloved place no more. Then his dogged will prevailed and carried him away toward the sea, but crying like a woman now, and hanging all dislocated over his horse's mane.

Now about half a mile farther on, as he crept along on a vile and narrow road, all woe-begone and broken, he heard a mighty scurry of horse's feet in the field to his left; he looked languidly up; and the first thing he saw was a great piebald horse's head and neck in the act of rising in the air, and doubling his fore legs under him, to leap the low hedge a yard or two in front of him.

He did leap, and landed just in front of Griffith; his rider curbed him so keenly that he went back almost on his haunches, and then stood motionless all across the road, with quivering tail. A lady in a scarlet riding-habit and purple cap sat him as if he had been a throne instead of a horse, and, without moving her body, turned her head swift as a snake, and fixed her great gray eyes full and searching upon Griffith Gaunt.

He uttered a little shout of joy and amazement; his mare reared and plunged, and then was quiet. And thus Kate Peyton and he met—at right angles—and so close that it looked as if she had meant to ride him down.

How he stared at her! How more than mortal fair she shone, returning to those bereaved eyes of his, as if she had really dropped from heaven!

His clasped hands, his haggard face channeled by tears, showed the keen girl she was strong where she had thought herself weak, and she comforted herself accordingly, and in one moment took a much higher tone than she had intended as she came along.

"I am afraid," said she, very coldly, "you will have to postpone your journey a day or two. I am grieved to tell you that poor Mr. Charlton is dead."

Griffith uttered an exclamation.

"He asked for you; and messengers are out after you on every side. You must go to Bolton at once."

"Well-a-day!" said Griffith, "has he left me, too? Good, kind old man, on any other day I had found tears for thee! But now, methinks, happy are the dead. Alas! sweet mistress, I hoped you came to tell me you had—I might—what signifies what I hoped?—when I saw you had deigned to ride after me. Why should I go to Bolton, after all?"

"Because you will be an ungrateful wretch else. What! leave others to carry your kinsman and benefactor to his grave, while you turn your back on him, and inherit his estate? For shame, sir! for shame!"

Griffith expostulated, humbly.

"How hardly you judge me! What are Bolton Hall and Park to me now? They were to have been yours, you know. And yours they shall be. I came between and robbed you. To be sure, the old man knew my mind. He said

to himself, 'Griffith or Kate, what matters it who has the land? They will live together on it.' But all that is changed now; you will never share it with me; and so I do feel I have no right to the place. Kate, my own Kate, I have heard them sneer at you for being poor, and it made my heart ache. I'll stop that, any way. Go you in my place to the funeral; he that is dead will forgive me; his spirit knows now what I endure; and I'll send you a writing, all sealed and signed, shall make Bolton Hall and Park yours; and when you are happy with some one you *can* love, as well as I love you, think sometimes of poor jealous Griffith, that loved you dear and grudged you nothing; but," grinding his teeth and turning white, "I *can't* live in Cumberland, and see you in another man's arms."

Then Catharine trembled, and could not speak a while; but at last she faltered out, "You will make me *hate* you."

"God forbid!" said simple Griffith.

"Well, then, don't thwart me, and provoke me so, but just turn your horse's head and go quietly to Bolton Hall, and do your duty to the dead and the living. You can't go *this* way, for me and my horse." Then, seeing him waver, this virago filtered out, "And I have been so tried to-day, first by one, then by another, surely you might have some pity on me. Oh! oh! oh! oh!"

"Nay, nay," cried Griffith, all in a flutter, "I'll go without more words; as I am a gentleman, I will sleep at Bolton this night, and will do my duty to the dead and the living. Don't you cry, sweetest; I'll give in. I find I have no will but yours."

The next moment they were cantering side by side, and never drew rein till they reached the cross-roads.

"Now tell me one thing," stammered Griffith, with a most ghastly attempt at cheerful indifference. "How—do you—happen to be—on George Neville's horse?"

Kate had been expecting this question for some time, yet she colored high when it did come. However, she had her answer pat. The horse was in the stable-yard, and fresh; her own was tired.

"What was I to do, Griffith? And now," added she, hastily, "the sun will soon set, and the roads are bad; be careful. I wish I could ask you to sleep at our house; but—there are reasons—"

She hesitated; she could not well tell him George Neville was to dine and sleep there.

Griffith assured her there was no danger; his mare knew every foot of the way.

They parted: Griffith rode to Bolton, and Kate rode home.

It was past dinner-time. She ran up stairs, and hurried on her best gown and her diamond comb; for she began to quake now at the prank she had played with her guest's horse; and Nature taught her that the best way to soften censure is—to be beautiful.

"On pardonne tout aux belles."

And certainly she was passing fair, and queenly with her diamond comb.

She came down stairs and was received by her father. He grumbled at being kept waiting for dinner.

Kate easily appeased the good-natured squire, and then asked what had become of Mr. Neville.

"Oh, he is gone long ago! Remembered, all of a sudden, he had promised to dine with a neighbor."

Kate shook her head skeptically, but said nothing. But a good minute after, she inquired,

"How did he go—on foot?"

The squire did not know.

After dinner old Joe sought an interview, and was admitted into the dining-room.

"Be it all right about the gray horse, master?"

"What of him?" asked Kate.

"He be gone to Neville Court, mistress. But I suppose" (with a horrid leer) "it is all right. Muster Neville told me all about it. He said, says he,

"Some do break a kine or the likes on these here j'yful occasions; other some do exchange good rings. Your young mistress and me, *we* exchange nags. She takes my pieball, I take her gray," says he. 'Saddle him for me, Joe,' says he, 'and wish me j'y.'

"So I clapped Muster Neville's saddle on the gray, and a gave me a goodden guinea, a did; and I was so struck of a heap I let un go without wishing on him j'y; but I hollered it arter un, as hard as I could. How you looks! It be all right, baint it?"

Squire Peyton laughed heartily, and said he concluded it was all right.

"The pieball," said he, "is rising five, and I've had the gray ten years. We have got the sunny side of that bargain, Joe."

He gave Joe a glass of wine and sent him off, inflated with having done a good stroke in horse-flesh.

As for Kate, she was red as fire, and kept her lips close as wax; not a word could be got out of her. The less she said, the more she thought. She was thoroughly vexed, and sore perplexed how to get her gray horse back from such a man as George Neville; and yet she could not help laughing at the trick, and secretly admiring this chevalier, who had kept his mortification to himself, and parried an affront so gallantly.

"The good-humored wretch!" said she to herself. "If Griffith ever goes away again, he will have me, whether I like or no. No lady could resist the monster long without some other man close at hand to help her."

CHAPTER V.

As, when a camel drops in the desert, vultures, hitherto unseen, come flying from the horizon, so Mr. Charlton had no sooner succumbed than the air darkened with undertakers, flocking to Bolton for a lugubrious job. They rode up on black steeds, they crunched the gravel in gray gigs, and sent in black-edged cards to Griffith, and lowered their voices, and bridled their briskness, and tried hard, poor souls! to be sad; and were horribly complacent beneath that thin japan of vernal sympathy.

Griffith selected his Raven, and then sat down to issue numerous invitations.

The idea of eschewing funeral pomp had not yet arisen. A gentleman of that day liked his very remains to make a stir, and did not see the

fun of stealing into his grave like a rabbit slipping aground. Mr. Charlton had even left behind him a sealed letter containing a list of the persons he wished to follow him to the grave and attend the reading of his will. These were thirty-four, and among them three known to fame, namely, George Neville, Esq., Edward Peyton, Esq., and Miss Catharine Peyton.

To all and each of the thirty-four young Gaunt wrote a formal letter, inviting them to pay respect to their deceased friend, and to honor himself, by coming to Bolton Hall at high noon on Saturday next. These letters, in compliance with another custom of the time and place, were all sent by mounted messengers, and the answers came on horseback too; so that there was much clattering of hoofs coming and going, and much roasting, baking, drinking of ale, and bustling, all along of him who lay so still in an upper chamber.

And every man and woman came to Mr. Gaunt to ask his will and advice, however simple the matter; and the servants turned very obsequious, and laid themselves out to please the new master, and retain their old places.

And, what with the sense of authority, and the occupation, and growing ambition, love-sick Griffith grew another man, and began to forget that two days ago he was leaving the country and going to give up the whole game.

He found time to send Kate a loving letter, but no talk of marriage in it. He remembered she had asked him to give her time. Well, he would take her advice.

It wanted just three days to the funeral, when Mr. Charlton's own carriage, long unused, was found to be out of repair. Griffith had it sent to the nearest town, and followed it on that and other business. Now it happened to be what the country folk called "justicing day;" and who should ride into the yard of the "Roebuck" but the new magistrate, Mr. Neville? He alighted off a great bony gray horse before Griffith's very nose, and sauntered into a private room.

Griffith looked, and looked, and, scarcely able to believe his senses, followed Neville's horse to the stable, and examined him all round.

Griffith was sore perplexed, and stood at the stable-door glaring at the horse; and sick misgivings troubled him. He forgot the business he came about, and went and hung about the bar, and tried to pick up a clew to this mystery. The poor wretch put on a miserable assumption of indifference, and asked one or two of the magistrates if that was not Mr. Peyton's gray horse young Neville had ridden in upon.

Now among these gentlemen was a young squire Miss Peyton had refused, and galled him. He had long owed Gaunt a grudge for seeming to succeed where he had notably failed, and now, hearing him talk so much about the gray, he smelt a rat. He stepped into the parlor and told Neville Gaunt was fuming about the gray horse, and questioning every body. Neville, though he put so bold a face on his recent adventure at Peyton Hall, was secretly smarting, and quite disposed to sting Gaunt in return. He saw a tool in this treacherous young squire—his name was Galton—and used him accordingly.

Galton, thoroughly primed by Neville, slipped back, and, choosing his opportunity, poisoned Griffith Gaunt.

And this is how he poisoned him.

"Oh," said he, "Neville has bought the gray nag; and cost him dear, it did."

Griffith gave a sigh of relief; for he at once concluded old Peyton had sold his daughter's very horse. He resolved to buy her a better one next week with Mr. Charlton's money.

But Galton, who was only playing with him, went on to explain that Neville had paid a double price for the nag: he had given Miss Peyton his piebald horse in exchange, and his troth into the bargain. In short, he lent the matter so adroit a turn, that the exchange of horses seemed to be Kate's act as much as Neville's, and the inference inevitable.

"It is a falsehood!" gasped Griffith.

"Nay," said Galton, "I had it on the best authority; but you shall not quarrel with me about it; the lady is naught to me, and I but tell the tale as 'twas told to me."

"Then who told it you?" said Gaunt, sternly.

"Why, it is all over the country, for that matter."

"No subterfuges, sir! I am the lady's servant, and you know it: this report, it slanders her, and insults me: give me the author, or I'll lay my hunting-whip on your bones."

"Two can play at that game," said Galton; but he turned pale at the prospect of the pastime.

Griffith strode toward him, black with ire.

Then Galton stammered out,

"It was Neville himself told me."

"Ah!" said Griffith, "I thought so. He is a liar, and a coward."

"I would not advise you to tell him so," said the other, maliciously. "He has killed his man in France—spitted him like a lark."

Griffith replied by a smile of contempt.

"Where is the man?" said he, after a pause.

"How should I know?" asked Galton, innocently.

"Where did you leave him five minutes ago?"

Galton was dumbfounded at this stroke, and could find nothing to say.

And now, as often happens, the matter took a turn not in the least anticipated by the conspirators.

"You must come with me, sir, if you please," said Griffith, quietly; and he took Galton's arm.

"Oh, with all my heart," said the other.

"But, Mr. Gaunt, do not you take these idle reports to heart—I never do. What the devil—where are you carrying me to? For heaven's sake, let this foolish business go no farther."

For he found Griffith was taking him to the very room where Neville was.

Griffith deigned no reply; he just opened the door of the room in question, and walked the tale-bearer into the presence of the tale-maker. George Neville rose and confronted the pair with a vast appearance of civility, but under it a sneer was just discernible.

The rivals measured each other from head to foot, and then Neville inquired to what he owed the honor of this visit.

Griffith replied, "He tells me you told him Miss Peyton has exchanged horses with you."

"Oh, you indiscreet person!" said George, shaking his finger playfully at Galton.

"And, by the same token, has plighted her troth to you."

"Worse and worse," said George. "Galton, I'll never trust you with any secrets again. Besides, you exaggerate."

"Come, sir," said Griffith, sternly, "this Ned Galton was but your tool and your mouth-piece, and therefore I bring him here to witness my reply to you: Mr. George Neville, you are a liar and a scoundrel."

George Neville bounded to his feet like a tiger.

"I'll have your life for those two words," he cried.

Then he suddenly governed himself by a great effort.

"It is not for me to bandy words with a Cumberland savage," said he. "Name your time and place."

"I will. Ned Galton, you may go. I wish to say a few words in private to Mr. Neville."

Galton hesitated.

"No violence, gentlemen: consider."

"Nonsense!" said Neville. "Mr. Gaunt and I are going to fight: we are not going to brawl. Be so good as to leave us."

"Ay," said Griffith; "and if you repeat a word of all this, woe be to your skin!"

As soon as he was gone, Griffith Gaunt turned very grave and calm, and said to George Neville, "The Cumberland savage has been better taught than to expose the lady he loves to gossiping tongues."

Neville colored up to the eyes at this thrust.

Griffith continued, "The least you can do is to avoid fresh scandal."

"I shall be happy to co-operate with you so far," said Neville, stiffly. "I undertake to keep Galton silent; and for the rest, we have only to name an early hour for meeting, and confide it to but one discreet friend apiece who will attend us to the field. Then there will be no gossip, and no bumpkins nor constables breaking in: such things have happened in this country, I hear."

It was Wednesday. They settled to meet on Friday, at noon, on a hill-side between Bolton and Neville's Court. The spot was exposed, but so wild and unfrequented that no interruption was to be feared. Mr. Neville being a practiced swordsman, Gaunt chose pistols—a weapon at which the combatants were supposed to be pretty equal. To this Neville very handsomely consented.

By this time a stiff and elaborate civility had taken the place of their heat, and at parting they bowed both long and low to each other.

Griffith left the inn and went into the street; and as soon as he got there, he began to realize what he had done, and that in a day or two he might very probably be a dead man. The first thing he did was to go with sorrowful face and heavy step to Mr. Houseman's office.

Mr. Houseman was a highly respectable solicitor. His late father and he had long enjoyed the confidence of the gentry, and this enabled him to avoid litigious business, and confine himself pretty much to the more agreeable and lucrative occupation of drawing wills, settlements, and conveyances, and effecting loans, sales, and transfers. He visited the landed proprietors, and dined with them, and was a great favorite in the country.

"Justicing day" brought him many visits; so

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on that day he was always at his place of business. Indeed, a client was with him when Griffith called, and the young gentleman had to wait in the outer office for full ten minutes.

Then a door opened and the client in question came out, looking mortified and anxious. It was Squire Peyton. At sight of Gaunt, who had risen to take his vacant place, Kate's father gave him a stiff nod and an unfriendly glance, then hurried away.

Griffith was hurt at his manner. He knew very well Mr. Peyton looked higher for his daughter than Griffith Gaunt; but, for all that, the old gentleman had never shown him any personal dislike or incivility until this moment.

So Griffith could not but fear that Neville was somehow at the bottom of this, and that the combination was very strong against him. Now in thus interpreting Mr. Peyton's manner he fell into a very common error and fruitful cause of misunderstanding. We go and fancy that Everybody is thinking of us. But he is not; he is like us; he is thinking for himself.

"Well, well," thought Griffith, "if I am not to have her, what better place for me than the grave?"

He entered Mr. Houseman's private room and opened his business at once.

But a singular concurrence of circumstances induced Lawyer Houseman to confide to a third party the substance of what passed between this young gentleman and himself. So, to avoid repetition, the best way will be to let Houseman tell this part of my tale instead of me, and I only hope his communication, when it comes, may be half as interesting to my reader as it was to his hearer.

Suffice it for me to say that lawyer and client were closeted a good hour, and were still conversing together when a card was handed in to Mr. Houseman that seemed to cause him both surprise and pleasure.

"In five minutes," said he to the clerk. Griffith took the hint, and bade him good-by directly.

As he went out, the gentleman who had sent in his card rose from a seat in the outer office to go in.

It was Mr. George Neville.

Griffith Gaunt and he saluted and scanned each other curiously. They little thought to meet again so soon. The clerks saw nothing more than two polite gentlemen passing each other.

The more Griffith thought of the approaching duel, the less he liked it. He was an impulsive man, for one thing; and with such, a cold fit naturally succeeds a hot one. And, besides, as his heat abated, Reason and Reflection made themselves heard, and told him that in a contest with a formidable rival he was throwing away an advantage. After all, Kate had shown him great favor; she had ridden Neville's horse after him, and made him resign his purpose of leaving her; surely, then, she preferred him, on the whole, to Neville; yet he must go and risk his chance of possessing her upon a personal encounter, in which Neville was at least as likely to kill him as he to kill Neville. He saw too late that he was playing his rival's game. He felt cold and despondent, and more and more convinced that he should never marry Kate, but that she would very likely bury him.

With all this he was too game to recoil, and, indeed, he hated his rival too deeply. So, like many a man before him, he was going doggedly to the field against his judgment, with little to win and all to lose.

His deeper and more solemn anxieties were diversified by a lighter one. A few days ago he had invited half the county to bury Mr. Charlton on Saturday, the 19th of February. But now he had gone and fixed Friday, the 18th, for a duel. A fine thing if he should be himself a corpse on Friday afternoon! Who was to receive the guests? who conduct the funeral?

The man, with all his faults, had a grateful heart; and Mr. Charlton was his benefactor, and he felt he had no right to go and get himself killed until he had paid the last rites to his best friend.

The difficulty admits, of course, of a comic view, and smells Hibernian; but these things seem any thing but dull to those whose lives and feelings are at stake; and, indeed, there was something chivalrous and touching in Griffith's vexation at the possibility of his benefactor being buried without due honors, owing to his own intemperate haste to be killed. He resolved to provide against that contingency; so, on the Thursday, he wrote an urgent letter to Mr. Houseman, telling him he must come early to the funeral, and be prepared to conduct it.

This letter was carried to Mr. Houseman's office at three o'clock on Thursday afternoon.

Mr. Houseman was not at home. He was gone to a country-house nine miles distant. But Griffith's servant was well mounted, and had peremptory orders; so he rode after Mr. Houseman, and found him at Mr. Peyton's house, whither, if you please, we too will follow him.

In the first place, you must know that the real reason why Mr. Peyton looked so savage, coming out of Mr. Houseman's office, was this: Neville had said no more about the hundred pounds, and, indeed, had not visited the house since; so Peyton, who had now begun to reckon on this sum, went to Houseman to borrow it. But Houseman politely declined to lend it him, and gave excellent reasons. All this was natural enough, common enough; but the real reason why Houseman declined was a truly singular one. The fact is, Catharine Peyton had made him promise to refuse.

Between that young lady and the Housemans, husband and wife, there was a sincere friendship, founded on mutual esteem, and Catharine could do almost what she liked with either of them. Now, whatever might have been her faults, she was a proud girl, and an intelligent one: it mortified her pride to see her father borrowing here, and borrowing there, and unable to repay; and she had also observed that he always celebrated a new loan by a new extravagance, and so was never a penny the richer for borrowed money. He had inadvertently let fall that he should apply to Houseman. She raised no open objection, but just mounted Piebald, and rode off to Houseman, and made him solemnly promise her not to lend her father a shilling.

Houseman kept his word; but his refusal cost him more pain than he had calculated on when he made the promise. Squire Peyton had paid him thousands, first and last; and when he left Houseman's room, with disappointment, morti-

fication, and humiliation deeply marked on his features, usually so handsome and jolly, the lawyer felt sorry and ashamed—and did *not* show it.

But it rankled in him; and the very next day he took advantage of a little business he had to do in Mr. Peyton's neighborhood, and drove to Peyton Hall, and asked for Mistress Kate.

It is a curious errand. Indeed, I think it would not be easy to find a parallel to it.

For here was an attorney calling upon a beautiful girl—to do what?

To soften her.

On a daughter—to do what?

To persuade her to permit him to lend her father £100 on insufficient security.

Well, he reminded her of his ancient obligations to her family, and assured her he could well afford to risk a hundred or even a thousand pounds. He then told her that her father had shown great pain at his refusal, and that he himself was human, and could not divest himself of gratitude, and pity, and good-nature—all for £100.

"In a word," said he, "I have brought the money; and you must give in for this once, and let me lend it him without more ado."

Miss Peyton was gratified and affected, and a tear trembled a moment in her eye, but went in-doors again, and left her firm as a rock sprinkled with dew. She told him she could quite understand his feeling, and thanked him for it; but she had long and seriously weighed the matter, and could not release him from his promise.

"No more of this base borrowing," said she, and clenched her white teeth indomitably.

He attacked her with a good many weapons, but she parried them all so gently, yet so nobly, and so successfully, that he admired her more than ever.

Still, lawyers fight hard, and die very hard. Houseman got warm in his cause, and cross-examined this defendant, and asked her whether *she* would refuse to lend her father £100 out of a full purse.

This question was answered only by a flash of her glorious eyes, and a magnificent look of disdain at the doubt implied.

"Well, then," said Houseman, "be your father's surety for repayment, with interest at six per centum, and then there will be nothing in the business to wound your dignity. I have many hundreds out at six per centum."

"Excuse me; that would be dishonorable," said Kate; "I have no money to repay you with."

"But you have expectations."

"Nay, not I."

"I beg your pardon."

"Methinks I should know, sir. What expectations have I? and from whom?"

Houseman fidgeted on his seat, and then, with some hesitation, replied, "Well, from two that I know of."

"You are jesting, methinks, good Mr. Houseman," said she, reproachfully.

"Nay, dear Mistress Kate, I wish you too well to jest on such a theme."

The lawyer then fidgeted again on his seat in silence—sign of an inward struggle—during which Kate's eye watched him with some curiosity. At last his wavering balance inclined toward revealing something or other.

"Mistress Kate," said he, "my wife and I are both your faithful friends and humble admirers. We often say you would grace a coronet, and wish you were as rich as you are good and beautiful."

Kate turned her lovely head away, and gave him her hand. That incongruous movement, so full of womanly grace and feeling, and the soft pressure of her white hand, completed her victory, and the remains of Houseman's reserve melted away.

"Yes, my dear young lady," said he, warmly, "I have good news for you; only mind, not a living soul must ever know it from your lips. Why, I am going to do for you what I never did in my life before—going to tell you something that passed yesterday in my office. But then I know you; you are a young lady out of a thousand; I can trust you to be discreet and silent—can I not?"

"As the grave."

"Well, then, my young mistress—in truth it was like a play, though the scene was but a lawyer's office—"

"Was it?" cried Kate. "Then you set me all of a flutter; you must sup here, and sleep here. Nay, nay," said she, her eyes sparkling with animation, "I'll take no denial. My father dines abroad: we shall have the house to ourselves."

Her interest was keenly excited; but she was a true woman, and must coquette with her very curiosity; so she ran off to see with her own eyes that sheets were aired, and a roasting fire lighted in the blue bedroom for her guest.

While she was away a servant brought in Griffith Gaunt's letter, and a sheet of paper had to be borrowed to answer it.

The answer was hardly written and sent out to Griffith's servant when supper and the fair hostess came in almost together.

After supper fresh logs were heaped on the fire, and the lawyer sat in a cozy arm-chair, and took out his diary and several papers as methodically as if he was going to lay the case by counsel before a judge of assize.

Kate sat opposite him with her gray eyes beaming on him all the time, and searching for the hidden meaning of every thing he told her. During the recital which follows, her color often came and went, but those wonderful eyes never left the narrator's face a moment.

They put the attorney on his mettle, and he elaborated the matter more than I should have done: he articulated his topics; marked each salient fact by a long pause. In short, he told his story like an attorney, and not like a romanticist. I can not help that, you know; I'm not Procrustes.

MR. HOUSEMAN'S LITTLE NARRATIVE.

WEDNESDAY, the seventeenth day of February, at about one of the clock, called on me at my place of business Mr. Griffith Gaunt, whom I need not here describe, inasmuch as his person and place of residence are well known to the court—what am I saying?—I mean, well known to yourself, Mistress Kate.

"The said Griffith, on entering my room, seemed moved, and I might say distempered, and did not give himself time to salute me and

receive my obeisance, but addressed me abruptly and said as follows: 'Mr. Houseman, I am come to make my will.'"

("Dear me!" said Kate: then blushed, and was more on her guard.)

"I seated the young gentleman, and then replied that his resolution aforesaid did him credit, the young being as mortal as the old. I said farther that many disasters had happened, in my experience, owing to the obstinacy with which men, in the days of their strength, shut their eyes to the precarious tenure under which all sons of Adam hold existence; and so, many a worthy gentleman dies in his sins—and, what is worse, dies intestate.

"But the said Griffith interrupted me with some signs of impatience, and asked me bluntly, would I draw his will, and have it executed on the spot.

"I assented generally; but I requested him, by way of needful preliminary, to obtain for me a copy of Mr. Charlton's will, under which, as I have always understood, the said Griffith inherits whatever real estate he hath to bequeath.

"Mr. Griffith Gaunt then replied to me that Mr. Charlton's will was in London, and the exact terms of it could not be known until after the funeral—that is to say, upon the nineteenth instant.

"Thereupon I explained to Mr. Gaunt that I must see and know what properties were devised in the will aforesaid, by the said Charlton, to Gaunt aforesaid, and how devised and described. Without this, I said, I could not correctly and sufficiently describe the same in the instrument I was now requested to prepare.

"Mr. Gaunt did not directly reply to this objection. But he pondered a little while, and then asked me if it were not possible for him, by means of general terms, to convey to a sole legatee whatever lands, goods, chattels, etc., Mr. Charlton might hereafter prove to have devised to him, the said Griffith Gaunt.

"I admitted this was possible, but objected that it was dangerous. I let him know that in matters of law general terms are a fruitful source of dispute, and I said I was one of those who hold it a duty to avert litigation from our clients.

"Therenpon Mr. Gaunt drew out of his bosom a pocket-book.

"The said pocket-book was shown to me by the said Gaunt, and I say it contained a paragraph from a newspaper, which I believe to have been cut out of the said newspaper with a knife, or a pair of scissors, or some trenchant instrument; and the said paragraph purported to contain an exact copy of a certain will and testament under which (as is, indeed, matter of public notoriety) one Dame Butcher hath inherited and now enjoys the lands, goods, and chattels of a certain merry parson late deceased in these parts, and, *I believe*, little missed.

"Mr. Gaunt would have me read the will and testament aforesaid, and I read it accordingly; and inasmuch as bad things are best remembered, the said will and testament did, by its singularity and profaneness, fix itself forthwith in my

memory, so that I can by no means dislodge it thence, do what I may.

"The said document, to the best of my memory and belief, runneth after this fashion:

"I, John Raymond, clerk, at present residing at Whitbeck, in the County of Cumberland, being a man sound in body, mind, and judgment, do deliver this as my last will and testament:

"I give and bequeath all my real property, and all my personal property, and all the property, whether real or personal, I may hereafter possess or become entitled to, to my housekeeper, Janet Butcher.

"And I appoint Janet Butcher my sole executrix, and I make Janet Butcher my sole residuary legatee; save and except that I leave my solemn curse to any knave who hereafter shall at any time pretend that he does not understand the meaning of this my will and testament."

(Catharine smiled a little at this last bequest.)

"Mr. Gaunt then solemnly appealed to me as an honest man to tell him whether the aforesaid document was bad, or good, in law.

"I was fain to admit that it was sufficient in law; but I qualified, and said I thought it might be attacked on the score of the hussy's undue influence, and the testator's apparent insanity. Nevertheless, I concluded candidly that neither objection would prevail in our courts, owing to the sturdy prejudice in the breasts of English jurymen, whose ground of faith it is that every man has a right to do what he will with his own, and even to do it how he likes.

"Mr. Gaunt did speedily abuse this my candor. He urged me to lose no time, but to draw his will according to the form and precedent in that case made and provided by this mad parson; and my clerks, forsooth, were to be the witnesses thereof.

"I refused, with some heat, to sully my office by allowing such an instrument to issue therefrom; and I asked the said Gaunt, in high dudgeon, for what he took me.

"Mr. Gaunt then offered, in reply, two suggestions that shook me. *Inprimis*, he told me the person to whom he now desired to leave his all was Mistress Catharine Peyton." (An ejaculation from Kate.) "*Secundo*, he said he would go straight from me to that coxcomb Harrison, were I to refuse to serve him in the matter.

"On this, having regard to your interest and my own, I temporized: I offered to let him draw a will after his parson's precedent, and I agreed it should be witnessed in my office; only I stipulated that next week a proper document should be drawn up by myself, with due particulars, on two sheets of paper, and afterward engrossed and witnessed; and to this Mr. Gaunt assented, and immediately drew his will according to newspaper precedent.

"But when I came to examine his masterpiece, I found he had taken advantage of my pliability to attach an unreasonable condition, to wit: that the said Catharine should forfeit all interest under this will in case she should ever marry a certain party therein nominated, specified, and described."

("Now that was Griffith all over," cried Catharine, merrily.)

"I objected stoutly to this. I took leave to remind the young gentleman that, when a Christian man makes his last will and testament, he should think of the grave and of the place beyond, whither we may carry our affections, but must leave the bundle of our hates behind, the gate being narrow. I even went so far as to doubt whether such a proviso could stand in law; and I also put a practical query: what was to hinder the legatee from selling the property and diverting the funds, and then marrying whom she liked?

"Mr. Gaunt was deaf to reason. He bade me remember that he was neither saint nor apostle, but a poor gentleman of Cumberland, who saw a stranger come between him and his lover dear: with that he was much moved, and did not conclude his argument at all, but broke off, and was fain to hide his face with both hands a while. In truth, this touched me; and I looked another way, and began to ask myself, why should I interfere, who, after all, know not your heart in the matter; and, to be brief, I withstood him and Parson's law no more, but sent his draught will to the clerks, the which they copied fair in a trice, and the duplicates were signed and witnessed in red-hot haste—as most of men's follies are done, for that matter.

"The paper writing now produced and shown to me—tush! what am I saying?—I mean the paper writing I now produce and show to you is the draught of the will aforesaid, in the handwriting of the testator."

And with this he handed Kate Peyton Griffith Gaunt's will, and took a long and satirical pinch of snuff while she examined it.

Miss Peyton took the will in her white hands and read it. But, in reading it, she held it up and turned it so that her friend could not see her face while she read it, but only her white hands, in which the document rustled a little.

It ran thus:

"I, Griffith Gaunt, late of the Eyrie, and now residing at Bolton Hall, in the County of Cumberland, being sound in body and mind, do deliver this as my last will and testament. I give and bequeath all the property, real or personal, which I now possess or may hereafter become entitled to, to my dear friend and mistress, Catharine Peyton, daughter of Edward Peyton, Esquire, of Peyton Hall; provided always that the said Catharine Peyton shall at no time within the next ten years marry George Neville, of Neville's Court, in this county. But should the said Catharine marry the said George within ten years of this day, then I leave all my said property, in possession, remainder, or reversion, to my heir-at-law."

The fair legatee read this extraordinary testament more than once. At last she handed it back to Mr. Houseman without a word. But her cheek was red, and her eyes glistening.

Mr. Houseman was surprised at her silence; and as he was curious to know her heart, he sounded her—asked her what she thought of that part of his story. But she evaded him with all the tact of her sex.

"What! that is not all, then?" said she, quickly.

Houseman replied that it was barely half.

"Then tell me all—pray tell me all," said Kate, earnestly.

"I am here to that end," said Houseman, and recommenced his narrative.

"The business being done to Mr. Gaunt's satisfaction, though not to mine, we fell into some friendly talk; but in the midst of it my clerk Thomas brought me in the card of a gentleman whom I was very desirous to secure as a client.

"Mr. Gaunt, I think, read my mind, for he took leave of me forthwith. I attended him to the door, and then welcomed the gentleman aforesaid. It was no other than Mr. George Neville.

"Mr. Neville, after such gracious civilities as his native breeding and foreign travel have taught him, came to business, and requested me—to draw his will."

("La!" said Kate.)

"I was a little startled, but hid it and took his instructions. This done, I requested to see the title-deeds of his estates, with a view to describing them, and he went himself to his banker's for them and placed them in my hands.

"I then promised to have the will ready in a week or ten days. But Mr. Neville, with many polite regrets for hurrying me, told me upon his honor he could give me but twenty-four hours. 'After that,' said he, 'it might be too late.'"

("Ah!" said Miss Peyton.)

"Determined to retain my new client, I set my clerks to work, and this very day was engrossed, signed, and witnessed the last will and testament of George Neville, Esquire, of Neville's Court, in the County of Cumberland, and Leicester Square, London, where he hath a noble mansion.

"Now as to the general disposition of his lands, manorial rights, messuages, tenements, goods, chattels, etc., and his special legacies to divers ladies and gentlemen and domestic servants, these I will not reveal even to you.

"The paper I now produce is a copy of that particular bequest which I have decided to communicate to you in strict and sacred confidence."

And he handed her an extract from George Neville's will.

Miss Peyton then read what follows:

"And I give and bequeath to Mistress Catharine Peyton, of Peyton Hall, in the said County of Cumberland, in token of my respect and regard, all that my freehold estate called Moniton Grange, with the messuage or tenement standing and being thereon, and the farm-yard buildings and appurtenances belonging thereto, containing by estimation three hundred and seventy-six acres three roods and five perches, be the same little more or less, to hold to her the said Catharine Peyton, her heirs and assigns, forever."

The legatee laid down the paper, and leaned her head softly on her fair hand, and her eyes explored vacancy.

"What means all this?" said she, aloud, but to herself.

Mr. Houseman undertook the office of inter-preter.

"Means? Why, that he has left you one of the snugest estates in the county. 'Tis not quite so large as Bolton, but lies sunnier, and the land richer. Well, mistress, was I right? Are you not good for a thousand pounds?"

Kate, still manifestly thinking of something else, let fall, as it were, out of her mouth, that Mr. Gaunt and Mr. Neville were both men in the flower of their youth, and how was she the richer for their folly?

"Why," said Houseman, "you will not have to wait for the death of these testators—Heaven forbid! But what does all this making of wills show me? That both these gentlemen are deep in love with you; and you can pick and choose; I say, you can wed with Bolton Hall or Neville's Court to-morrow; so, prithee, let the squire have his hundred pounds, and do you repay me at your leisure."

Miss Peyton made no reply, but leaned her exquisite head upon her hand and pondered.

She did not knit her brows, nor labor visibly at the mental oar; yet a certain reposeful gravity and a fixity of the thoughtful eye showed she was applying all the powers of her mind.

Mr. Houseman was not surprised at that: his own wife had but little intellect, yet had he seen her weigh two rival bonnets in mortal silence, and with all the seeming profundity of a judge on the bench. And now this young lady was doubtless weighing farms with similar gravity, care, and intelligence.

But as this continued, and still she did not communicate her decision, he asked her point-blank which of the two she settled to wed, Neville's Court or Bolton Grange.

Thus appealed to, Miss Peyton turned her great eye on him, without really looking at him, and replied, "You have made me very uneasy."

He stared. She relapsed into thought a moment, and then, turning to Houseman, asked him how he accounted for those two gentlemen making their wills. They were very young to make their wills all of a sudden.

"Why," said Houseman, "Mr. Neville is a man of sense, and every man of sense makes his will; and as for Mr. Gaunt, he has just come into prospect of an estate; that's why."

"Ah! but why could not Griffith wait till after the funeral?"

"Oh, clients are always in a hurry."

"So you see nothing in it—nothing alarming, I mean?"

"Nothing very alarming. Two landed proprietors in love with you—that is all."

"But, dear Mr. Houseman, that is what makes me uneasy; at this rate, they must look on one another as—as—rivals; and you know rivals are sometimes enemies."

"Oh, I see now," said Houseman: "you apprehend a quarrel between the gentlemen. Of course, there is no love lost between them; but they met in my office and saluted each other with perfect civility. I saw them with my own eyes."

"Indeed! I am glad to hear that—very glad. I hope it was only a coincidence, then, their both making their wills."

"Nothing more, you may depend: neither of them knows from me what the other has done, nor ever will."

"That is true," said Kate, and seemed considerably relieved.

To ease her mind entirely, Houseman went on to say that, as to the report that high words had passed between the clients in question at the "Roebuck," he had no doubt it was exaggerated.

"Besides," said he, "that was not about a lady: I'm told it was about a horse—some bet, belike."

Catharine uttered a faint cry.

"About a horse?" said she. "Not about a gray horse?"

"Nay, that is more than I know."

"High words about a horse," said Catharine—"and they are making their wills. Oh! my mind misgave me from the first." And she turned pale. Presently she clasped her hands together—"Mr. Houseman!" she cried, "what shall I do? What! do you not see that both their lives are in danger, and that is why they make their wills? And how should *both* their lives be in danger but from each other? Madmen! they have quarreled; they are going to fight—fight to the death; and I fear it is about me—me, who love neither of them, you know."

"In that case, *let them fight*," said her legal adviser, dispassionately. "Whichever fool gets killed, you will be none the poorer." And the dog wore a sober complacency.

Catharine turned her large eyes on him with horror and amazement, but said nothing.

As for the lawyer, he was more struck with her sagacity than with any thing. He somewhat overrated it, not being aware of the private reasons for thinking that her two testators were enemies to the death.

"I almost think you are right," said he, "for I got a curious missive from Mr. Gaunt scarce an hour ago, and he says—let me see what he says—"

"Nay, let me see," said Kate.

On that he handed her Griffith's note. It ran thus:

"It is possible I may not be able to conduct the funeral. Should this be so, I appoint you to act for me. So, then, good Mr. Houseman, let me count on you to be here at nine of the clock. For Heaven's sake fail me not.

"Your humble servant, G. G."

This note left no doubt in Kate's mind.

"Now, first of all," said she, "what answer made you to this?"

"What answer should I make? I pledged my word to be at Bolton at nine of the clock."

"Oh, blind!" sighed Kate. "And I must be out of the room! What shall I do? My dear friend, forgive me: I am a wretched girl. I am to blame. I ought to have dismissed them both, or else decided between them. But who would have thought it would go this length? I did not think Griffith was brave enough. Have pity on me, and help me. Stop this fearful fighting." And now the young creature clung to the man of business, and prayed and prayed him earnestly to avert bloodshed.

Mr. Houseman was staggered by this passionate appeal from one who so rarely lost her self-command. He soothed her as well as he could, and said he would do his best; but added, which was very true, that he thought her interference would be more effective than his own.

"What care these young bloods for an old attorney? I should fare ill came I between their rapiers. To be sure, I might bind them over to keep the peace. But, Mistress Kate, now be frank with me, then I can serve you better. You love one of these two, that is clear. Which is the man?—that I may know what I am about."

For all her agitation, Kate was on her guard in some things.

"Nay," she faltered, "I love neither—not to say love them; but I pity him so!"

"Which?"

"Both."

"Ay, mistress; but which do you pity most?" asked the shrewd lawyer.

"Whichever shall come to harm for my sake," replied the simple girl.

"You could not go to them to-night, and bring them to reason?" asked she, piteously.

She went to the window to see what sort of a night it was. She drew the heavy crimson curtains and opened the window. In rushed a bitter blast laden with flying snow. The window-ledge, too, were clogged with snow, and all the ground was white.

Houseman shuddered, and drew nearer to the blazing logs. Kate closed the window with a groan.

"It is not to be thought of," said she, "at your age, and not a road to be seen for snow. What shall I do?"

"Wait till to-morrow," said Mr. Houseman.

(Procrastination was his daily work, being an attorney.)

"To-morrow!" cried Catharine. "Perhaps to-morrow will be too late. Perhaps even now they have met, and he lies a corpse."

"Who?"

"Whichever it is, I shall end my days in a convent praying for his soul."

She wrung her hands while she said this, and still there was no catching her.

Little did the lawyer think to rouse such a storm with his good news. And now he made a feeble and vain attempt to soothe her, and ended by promising to start the first thing in the morning and get both her testators bound over to keep the peace by noon. With this resolution he went to bed early.

She was glad to be alone, at all events.

Now, mind you, there were plenty of vain and vulgar, yet respectable girls in Cumberland, who would have been delighted to be fought about, even though bloodshed were to be the result. But this young lady was not vain, but proud. She was sensitive, too, and troubled with a conscience. It reproached her bitterly: it told her she had permitted the addresses of two gentlemen, and so mischief had somehow arisen—out of her levity. Now her life had been uneventful and innocent: this was the very first time she had been connected with any thing like a crime, and her remorse was great; so was her grief; but her fears were greater still. The terrible look Griffith had cast at his rival flashed on her, so did his sinister words. She felt that, if he and Neville met, nothing less than Neville's death or his own would separate them. Suppose that even now one of them lay a corpse, cold and ghastly as the snow that now covered Nature's face!

The agitation of her mind was such that her

body could not be still. Now she walked the room in violent distress, wringing her hands; now she kneeled and prayed fervently for both those lives she had endangered; often she flew to the window and looked eagerly out, writhing and rebelling against the network of female custom that entangled her and would not let her fly out of her cage even to do a good action—to avert a catastrophe by her prayers, or her tears, or her good sense.

And all ended in her realizing that she was a woman—a poor, impotent being, born to lie quiet and let things go: at that she wept helplessly.

So wore away the first night of agony this young creature ever knew.

Toward morning, exhausted by her inward struggles, she fell asleep upon a sofa.

But her trouble followed her. She dreamed she was on a horse, hurried along with prodigious rapidity, in a darkened atmosphere, a sort of dry fog: she knew somehow she was being taken to see some awful, mysterious thing. By-and-by the haze cleared, and she came out upon pleasant, open, sunny fields, that almost dazzled her. She passed gates, and hedges too, all clear, distinct, and individual. Presently a voice by her side said, "This way!" and her horse seemed to turn of his own accord through a gap, and in one moment she came upon a group of gentlemen. It was Griffith Gaunt and two strangers. Then she spoke and said, "But Mr. Neville?"

No answer was made her; but the group opened in solemn silence, and there lay George Neville on the snow, stark and stiff, with blood issuing from his temple, and trickling along the snow.

She saw distinctly all his well-known features; but they were pinched and sharpened now. And his dark olive skin was turned to bluish white. It was his corpse. And now her horse thrust out his nose and snorted like a demon. She looked down, and ah! the blood was running at her preternaturally fast along the snow. She screamed, her horse reared high, and she was falling on the blood-stained snow. She awoke, screaming; and the sunlight seemed to rush in at the window.

Her joy that it was only a dream overpowered every other feeling at first. She kneeled and thanked God for that.

The next thing was, she thought it might be a revelation of what had actually occurred.

But this chilling fear did not affect her long. Nothing could shake her conviction that a duel was on foot—and, indeed, the intelligent of her sex do sometimes put this and that together, and spring to a just but obvious inference in a way that looks to a slower and safer reasoner like divination; but then she knew that yesterday evening both parties were alive. Coupling this with Griffith's broad hint that after the funeral might be too late to make his will, she felt sure that it was this very day the combatants were to meet. Yes, and this very morning; for she knew that gentlemen always fought in the morning.

If her dream was false as to the past, it might be true as to what was at hand. Was it not a supernatural warning, sent to her in mercy? The history of her Church abounded in such dreams and visions; and, indeed, the time and place she lived in were rife with stories of the kind—one, in particular, of recent date.

This thought took hold of her, and grew on

her, till it overpowered even the diffidence of her sex; and then up started her individual character; and now nothing could hold her. For, languid and dreamy in the common things of life, this Catharine Peyton was one of those who rise into rare ardor and activity in such great crises as seem to benumb the habitually brisk, and they turn tame and passive.

She had seen at a glance that Houseman was too slow and apathetic for such an emergency. She resolved to act herself. She washed her face, and neck, and arms, and hands in cold water, and was refreshed and invigorated. She put on her riding-habit and her little gold spur (Griffith Gaunt had given it her), and hurried into the stable-yard.

Old Joe and his boy had gone away to breakfast: he lived in the village.

This was unlucky; Catharine must wait his return and lose time, or else saddle the horse herself. She chose the latter. The piebald was a good horse, but a fidgety one; so she saddled and bridled him at his stall. She then led him out to the stone steps in the stable-yard, and tried to mount him. But he sidled away; she had nobody to square him; and she could get nothing to mount but his head. She coaxed him, she tickled him on the other side with her whip. It was all in vain.

It was absurd, but heart-sickening. She stared at him with wonder that he could be so cruel as to play the fool when every minute might be life or death. She spoke to him, she implored him piteously, she patted him. All was in vain.

As a last resource, she walked him back to the stable, and gave him a sieveful of oats, and set it down by the corn-bin for him, and took an opportunity to mount the bin softly.

He ate the oats, but with retroverted eye watched her. She kept quiet and affected *nonchalance* till he became less cautious, then suddenly sprang on him, and taught him to set his wit against a woman's. My lord wheeled round directly, ere she could get her leg over the pommel, and made for the stable-door. She lowered her head to his mane, and just scraped out without injury—not an inch to spare. He set off at once; but, luckily for her, she had often ridden a bare-backed horse. She sat him for the first few yards by balance, then reined him in quietly, and soon whipped her left foot into the stirrup and her right leg over the pommel, and then the piebald nag had to pay for his pranks: the roads were clogged with snow, but she fanned him along without mercy, and never drew bridle till she pulled him up, drenched and steaming like a wash-tub, at Netley Cross-roads.

Here she halted irresolute. The road to the right led to Bolton, distant two miles and a half. The road in front led to Neville's Court, distant three miles. Which should she take? She had asked herself this a dozen times upon the road, yet could never decide until she got to the place and *must*. The question was, With which of them had she most influence? She hardly knew. But Griffith Gaunt was her old sweetheart; it seemed somewhat less strange and indelicate to go to him than to the new one. So she turned her horse's head toward Bolton; but she no longer went quite so fast as she had gone before she felt going to either in particular. Such is the female mind.

She reached Bolton at half past eleven, and, now she was there, put a bold face on it, rode up to the door, and, leaning forward on her horse, rang the hall bell.

A footman came to the door.

With composed visage, though beating heart, she told him she desired to speak for a moment to Mr. Griffith Gaunt. He asked her would she be pleased to alight; and it was clear by his manner no calamity had yet fallen.

"No, no," said Kate, let me speak to him here."

The servant went in to tell his master. Kate sat quiet, with her heart still beating, but glowing now with joy. She was in time, then, thanks to her good horse. She patted him, and made the prettiest excuses aloud to him for riding him so hard through the snow.

The footman came back to say that Mr. Gaunt had gone out.

"Gone out? Whither? On horseback?"

The footman did not know, but would ask within.

While he was gone to inquire, Catharine lost patience, and rode into the stable-yard, and asked a young lout who was lounging there whether his master was gone out on horseback.

The lounging youth took the trouble to call out the groom, and asked him.

The groom said "No," and that Mr. Gaunt was somewhere about the grounds, he thought.

But, in the midst of this colloquy, one of the maids, curious to see the lady, came out by the kitchen door, and courtesied to Kate, and told her Mr. Gaunt was gone out walking with two other gentlemen. In the midst of her discourse she recognized the visitor, and, having somehow imbibed the notion that Miss Peyton was likely to be Mrs. Gaunt, and govern Bolton Hall, decided to curry favor with her; so she called her "My Lady," and was very communicative. She said one of the gentlemen was strange to her, but the other was Doctor Islip, from Stanhope town. She knew him well; he had taken off her own brother's leg in a jiffy.

"But, dear heart, mistress," said she, "how pale you be! Do come in, and have a morsel of meat and a horn of ale."

"Nay, my good girl," said Kate, "I could not eat; but bring me a mug of new milk, if you will. I have not broken my fast this day."

The maid bustled in, and Catharine asked the groom if there were no means of knowing where Mr. Gaunt was. The groom and the boy scratched their heads, and looked puzzled. The lounging lout looked at their perplexity, and grinned satirically.

This youth was Tom Leicester, born in wedlock, and therefore, in the law's eye, son of old Simon Leicester; but gossips said his true father was the late Captain Gaunt. Tom ran with the hounds for his own sport—went out shooting with gentlemen, and belabored the briers for them at twopence per day and his dinner—and abhorred all that sober men call work.

By trade a Beater; profession, a Scamp.

Two maids came out together now, one with the milk and a roll, the other with a letter. Catharine drank the milk, but could not eat. Then says the other maid,

"If so be you are Mistress Peyton, why, this letter is for you. Master left it on his table in his bedroom."

Kate took the letter and opened it all in a flutter. It ran thus:

"SWEET MISTRESS,—When this reaches you, I shall be no more here to trouble you with my jealousy. This Neville set it abroad that you had changed horses with him, as much as to say you had plighted troth with him. He is a liar, and I told him so to his teeth. We are to meet at noon this day, and one must die. Methinks I shall be the one. But, come what may, I have taken care of thee; ask Jack Houseman else. But, oh dear Kate, think of all that hath passed between us, and do not wed this Neville, or I could not rest in my grave. Sweetheart, many a letter have I written thee, but none so sad as this. Let the grave hide my faults from thy memory; think only that I loved thee well. I leave thee my substance—would it were ten times more!—and the last thought of my heart. So no more in this world from him that is thy true lover and humble servant till death,

"GRIFFITH GAUNT."

There seems to be room in the mind for only one violent emotion at one instant of time. This touching letter did not just then draw a tear from her, who now received it some hours sooner than the writer intended. Its first effect was to paralyze her. She sat white and trembling, and her great eyes filled with horror. Then she began to scream wildly for help. The men and women came round her.

"Murder! murder!" she shrieked. "Tell me where to find him, ye wretches, or may his blood be upon your heads!"

The Scamp bounded from his lounging position, and stood before her straight as an arrow.

"Follow me!" he shouted.

Her gray eyes and the Scamp's black ones flashed into one another directly. He dashed out of the yard without another word.

And she spurred her horse, and clattered out after him.

He ran as fast as her horse could canter, and soon took her all round the house; and while he ran, his black gipsy eyes were glancing in every direction.

When they got to the lawn at the back of the house, he halted a moment, and said quietly, "Here they be."

He pointed to some enormous footsteps in the snow, and bade her notice that they commenced at a certain glass door belonging to the house, and that they all pointed outward. The lawn was covered with such marks, but the Scamp followed those his intelligence had selected, and they took him through a gate, and down a long walk, and into the park. Here no other feet had trodden that morning except those Tom Leicester was following.

"This is our game," said he. "See, there be six footsteps; and, now I look, this here track is Squire Gaunt's. I know his foot in the snow among a hundred. Bless your heart, I've often been out shooting with Squire Gaunt, and lost him in the woods, and found him again by tracking him on dead leaves, let alone snow. I say, wasn't they useless idiots? Couldn't tell ye how to run into a man, and snow on the ground! Why, you can track a hare to her form, and a rat to his hole—let alone such big game as this, with a hoof like a frying-pan—in the snow."

"Oh, do not talk; let us make haste," panted Kate.

"Canter away!" replied the Scamp.

She cantered on, and he ran by her side.

"Shall I not tire you?" said she.

The *mauvais sujet* laughed at her.

"Tire me? Not over this ground. Why, I run with the hounds, and mostly always in at the death; but that is not altogether speed; ye see I know Pug's mind. What! don't you know me? I'm Tom Leicester. Why, I know you: I say, you are a good-hearted one, you are."

"Oh, no! no!" sighed Kate.

"Nay, but you are," said Tom. "I saw you take Harrowden Brook that day, when the rest turned tail; and that is what I call having a good heart. Gently, mistress, here—this is full of rabbit-holes. I seen Sir Ralph's sorrel mare break her leg in a moment in one of these. Shot her dead that afternoon, a did, and then b'iled her for the hounds. She'd often follow at their tails; next hunting-day she ran inside their bellies. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Oh, don't laugh! I am in agony!"

"Why, what is up, mistress?" asked the young savage, lowering his voice. "'Murder,' says you; but that means *naught*. The lasses they cry murder if you do but kiss 'em."

"Oh, Tom Leicester, it is murder! It's a duel, a fight to the death, unless we are in time to prevent them."

"A jewel!" cried Master Leicester, his eyes glittering with delight. "I never saw a jewel. Don't you hold him in for me, mistress: gallop down this slope as hard as you can pelt; it is grass under foot, and ye can't lose the tracks, and I shall be sure to catch ye in the next field."

The young savage was now as anxious to be in at the death as Kate was to save life. As he spoke, he gave her horse a whack on the quarter with his stick, and away she went full gallop, and soon put a hundred yards between her and Tom.

The next field was a deep fallow, and the hard furrows reduced her to a trot; and before she got out of it Tom was by her side.

"Didn't I tell you?" said he. "I'd run you to Peyton Hall for a pot o' beer."

"Oh, you good, brave, clever boy!" said Kate, "how fortunate I am to have you! I think we shall be in time."

Tom was flattered.

"Why, you see, I am none of Daddy Leicester's breed," said he. "I'm a gentleman's by-blow, if you know what that is."

"I can't say I do," said Kate; "but I know you are very bold and handsome, and swift of foot; and I know my patron saint has sent you to me in my misery. And oh, my lad, if we are in time—what can I do for you? Are you fond of money, Tom?"

"That I be—when I can get it."

"Then you shall have all I have got in the world if you get me there in time to hinder mischief."

"Come on!" shouted Tom, excited in his turn, and took the lead; and not a word more passed till they came to the foot of a long hill. Then said Tom,

"Once we are at top of this, they can't fight without our seeing 'em. That is Scutchemsee

Nob:" you can see ten miles all round from there."

At this information Kate uttered an ejaculation, and urged her horse forward.

The first part of this hill, which stood between her and those whose tracks she followed, was grass; then came a strip of turnips; then, on the bleak top, a broad piece of heather. She soon cantered over the grass, and left Tom so far behind he could not quite catch her in the turnips. She entered the heather, but here she was much retarded by the snow-drifts and the ups and downs of the rough place. But she struggled on bravely, still leading.

She fixed her eyes earnestly on the ridge, whence she could cry to the combatants, however distant, and stop the combat.

Now, as she struggled on, and Tom came after, panting a little for the first time, suddenly there rose from the crest of the hill two columns of smoke, and the next moment two sharp reports ran through the frosty air.

Kate stopped, and looked round to Tom with a scared, inquiring air.

"Pistols!" yelled Tom behind her.

At that the woman overpowered the heroine, and Kate hid her face and fell to trembling and wailing. Her wearied horse came down to a walk.

Presently up comes Tom.

"Don't lose your stomach for that," he panted out. "Gentlefolks do pop at one another all day sometimes, and no harm done."

"Oh, bless you!" cried Kate, "I may yet be in time."

She spurred her horse on. He did his best, but, ere he had gone twenty yards, he plunged into a cavity hidden by the snow.

While he was floundering there, crack went a single pistol, and the smoke rose and drifted over the hill-top.

"Who—op!" muttered Tom, with horrible *sang-froid*. "There's one done for this time. Couldn't shoot back, ye see."

At this horrible explanation Kate sank forward on her horse's mane as if she herself had been killed, and the smoke from the pistol came floating thinner and thinner, and eddied high over her head.

Tom spoke rude words of encouragement to her. She did not even seem to hear them. Then he lost all patience at her, and clutched her arm to make her hear him. But at that it seemed as if some of his nature passed into her down his arm, for she turned wild directly, and urged her horse fiercely up the crest. Her progress was slow at first; but the sun had melted the snow on the Nob or extreme summit. She tore her way through the last of the snow on to the clear piece; then, white as ashes, spurred and lashed her horse over the ridge, and dashed in among them on the other side. For there they were.

What was the sight that met her eyes?

That belongs to the male branch of my story, and shall be told forthwith, but in its proper sequence.

CHAPTER VI.

THE two combatants came to the field in a very different spirit. Neville had already fought

two duels, and been successful in both. He had confidence in his skill and in his luck. His conscience, too, was tolerably clear, for he was the insulted person; and if a bullet should remove this dangerous rival from his path, why, all the better for him, and all the worse for the fool who had brought the matter to a bloody issue, though the balance of the lady's heart inclined his way.

He came in high spirits, and rode upon Kate Peyton's gray, to sting his adversary, and show his contempt of him.

Not so Griffith Gaunt. His heart was heavy, and foreboded ill. It was his first duel, and he expected to be killed. He had played a fool's game, and he saw it.

The night before the duel he tried hard to sleep; he knew it was not giving his nerves fair play to lie thinking all night. But coy sleep, as usual when most wanted, refused to come. At daybreak the restless man gave it up in despair, and rose and dressed himself. He wrote that letter to Catharine, little thinking it would fall into her hands while he lived. He ate a little toast, and drank a pint of Burgundy, and then wandered listlessly about till Major Rickards, his second, arrived.

That experienced gentleman brought a surgeon with him—Mr. Islip.

Major Rickards deposited a shallow wooden box in the hall, and the two gentlemen sat down to a hearty breakfast.

Griffith took care of his guests, but beyond that spoke scarcely a word; and the surgeon, after a ghastly attempt at commonplaces, was silent too. Major Rickards satisfied his appetite first, and then, finding his companions dumb, set to work to keep up their spirits. He entertained them with a narrative of the personal encounters he had witnessed, and especially of one in which his principal had fallen on his face at the first fire, and the antagonist had sprung into the air, and both had lain dead as door-nails, and never moved, nor even winked, after that single discharge.

Griffith sat under this chilling talk for more than an hour.

At last he rose gloomily, and said it was time to go.

"Got your tools, doctor?" inquired the major.

The surgeon nodded slightly. He was more discreet than his friend.

When they had walked nearly a mile in the snow, the major began to complain.

"The devil!" said he; "this is queer walking. My boots are full of water. I shall catch my death."

The surgeon smiled satirically, comparing silent Griffith's peril with his second's.

Griffith took no notice. He went like Fortitude plodding to Execution.

Major Rickards fell behind, and whispered Mr. Islip, "Don't like his looks; doesn't march like a winner. A job for you or the sexton, you mark my words."

They toiled up Scutchemsee Nob, and when they reached the top, they saw Neville and his second, Mr. Hammersley, riding toward them. The pair had halters as well as bridles, and, dismounting, made their nags fast to a large black-thorn that grew there. The seconds then stepped forward, and saluted each other with formal civility.

Griffith looked at the gray horse, and ground his teeth. The sight of the animal in Neville's possession stirred up his hate, and helped to steel his heart. He stood apart, still, pale, and gloomy.

The seconds stepped out fifteen paces, and placed the men. Then they loaded two pair of pistols, and put a pistol in each man's hand.

Major Rickards took that opportunity to advise his principal.

"Stand sharp. Keep your arm close to your side. Don't fire too high. How do you feel?"

"Like a man who must die, but will try to die in company."

The seconds now withdrew to their places, and the rivals held their pistols lowered, but fixed their deadly eyes on each other.

The eye, in such a circumstance, is a terrible thing: it is literally a weapon of destruction, for it directs the deadly hand that guides the deadly bullet. Moreover, the longer and the more steadily the duelist fixes his eye on his adversary, the less likely he is to miss.

Griffith was very pale, but dogged. Neville was serious, but firm. Both eyed each other unflinchingly.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" asked Neville's second.

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Then," said Major Rickards, "you will fire when I let fall this handkerchief, and not before. Mark me, gentlemen: to prevent mistakes, I shall say 'One—two—three!' and then drop the handkerchief. Now, then, once more, are you quite ready?"

"Yes."

"Yes."

"One—two—three!"

He dropped the handkerchief, and both gentlemen fired simultaneously. Mr. Neville's hat spun into the air; Griffith stood untouched.

The bullet had passed through Neville's hat, and had actually cut a lane through his magnificent hair.

The seconds now consulted, and it was intimated to Griffith that a word of apology would be accepted by his antagonist. Griffith declined to utter a syllable of apology.

Two more pistols were given to the men.

"Aim lower," said Rickards.

"I mean to," said Griffith.

The seconds withdrew, and the men eyed each other—Griffith dogged and pale as before, Neville not nearly so self-assured: Griffith's bullet, in grazing him, had produced the effect of a sharp, cold current of air no wider than a knife. It was like Death's icy forefinger laid on his head, to mark him for the next shot—as men mark a tree, then come again and fell it.

"One—two—three!"

And Griffith's pistol missed fire; but Neville's went off, and Griffith's arm sank powerless, and his pistol rolled out of his hand. He felt a sharp twinge, and then something trickled down his arm.

The surgeon and both seconds ran to him.

"Nay, it is nothing," said he; "I shoot far better with my left hand than my right. Give me another pistol, and let me have fair play. He has hit me, and now I'll hit him."

Both seconds agreed this was impossible.

"It is the chance of war," said Major Rickards; "you can not be allowed to take a cool shot at Mr. Neville. If you fire again, so must he."

"The affair may very well end here," said Mr. Hammersley. "I understand there was some provocation on our side; and, on behalf of the party insulted, I am content to let the matter end, Mr. Gaunt being wounded."

"I demand my second shot to his third," said Griffith, sternly; "he will not decline, unless he is a poltroon, as well as—what I called him."

The nature of this reply was communicated to Neville, and the seconds, with considerable reluctance, loaded two more pistols; and during the process Major Rickards glanced at the combatants.

Griffith, exasperated by his wound and his jealousy, was wearing out the chivalrous courage of his adversary, and the major saw it. His keen eye noticed that Neville was getting restless, and looking confounded at his despised rival's pertinacity, and that Gaunt was more dogged and more deadly.

"My man will kill yours this time," said he, quietly, to Neville's second; "I can see it in his eye. He is hungry; t'other has had his bellyful."

Once more the men were armed, and the seconds withdrew to their places, intimating that this was the last shot they would allow under any circumstances whatever.

"Are you both ready?"

"Yes."

"Yes."

A faint wail seemed to echo the response.

All heard it, and in that superstitious age believed it to be some mysterious herald of death.

It suspended even Major Rickards's voice a minute. He recovered himself, however, and once more his soldier-like tones rang in the keen air:

"One—"

There was a great rushing, and a pounding of the hard ground, and a scarlet Amazon galloped in, and drew up in the middle, right between the leveled pistols.

Every eye had been so bent on the combatants that Kate Peyton and her horse seemed to have sprung out of the very earth. And there she sat, pale as ashes, on the steaming piebald, and glanced from pistol to pistol.

The duelists stared in utter amazement, and instinctively lowered their weapons, for she had put herself right in their line of fire with a recklessness that contrasted nobly with her fear for others. In short, this apparition literally petrified them all, seconds as well as combatants.

And while they stood open-mouthed, yet dumb, in came the Scamp, and, with a brisk assumption of delegated authority, took Griffith's weapon out of his now unresisting hand, then marched to Neville. He instantly saluted Catharine, and then handed his pistol to her seeming agent, with a high-bred and inimitable air of utter nonchalance.

Kate, seeing them, to her surprise, so easily disarmed, raised her hands and her lovely eyes to heaven, and, in a feeble voice, thanked God and Saint Nescioquis.

But very soon that faint voice quavered away to nothing, and her fair head was seen to droop, and her eyes to close; then her body sank slow-

ly forward like a broken lily, and in another moment she lay fainting on the snow beside her steaming horse.

He never moved, he was so dead beat too.

Oh lame and impotent conclusion of a vigorous exploit! Masculine up to the crowning point, and then to go and spoil all with "woman's weakness!"

"N.B.—This is rote sarcastical," as Artemus the Delicious says. Woman's weakness! If Solomon had planned and Samson executed, they could not have served her turn better than this most seasonable swooning did; for, lo! at her fall, the doughty combatants uttered a yell of dismay, and there was an indiscriminate rush toward the fair sufferer.

But the surgeon claimed his rights.

"This is my business," said he, authoritative-ly. "Do not crowd on her, gentlemen; give her air."

Whereupon the duelists and seconds stood respectfully aloof, in a mixed group, and watched with eager interest and pity.

The surgeon made a hole in the snow, and laid his fair patient's head low.

"Don't be alarmed," said he; "she has swooned; that is all."

It was all mighty fine to say "Don't be alarmed." But her face was ashy, and her lips the color of lead; and she was so like death, they could not help being terribly alarmed; and now, for the first time, the duelists felt culpits; and as for fighting, every idea of such a thing went out of their heads. The rivals now were but rival nurses; and never did a lot of women make more fuss over a child than all these blood-thirsty men did over this Amazon *manquée*. They produced their legendary lore. One's grandmother had told him burnt feathers were the thing; another, from an equally venerable source, had gathered that those pink palms must be profanely slapped by the horny hand of man—for at no less a price could resuscitation be obtained. The surgeon scorning all their legends, Griffith and Neville made hasty rushes with brandy and usquebaugh; but whether to be taken internally or externally they did not say, nor, indeed, know, but only thrust their flasks wildly on the doctor, and he declined them loftily. He melted snow in his hand, and dashed it hard in her face, and put salts close to her pretty little nostrils. And this he repeated many times without effect.

But at last her lips began to turn from lead color to white, and then from white to pink, and her heavenly eyes to open again, and her mouth to murmur things pitifully small and not bearing on the matter in hand.

Her cheek was still colorless when her consciousness came back, and she found she was lying on the ground with ever so many gentlemen looking at her.

At that, Modesty, alarmed, sent the blood at once rushing to her pale cheek.

A lovely lily seemed turning to a lovely rose before their eyes.

The next thing was, she hid that blushing face in her hands, and began to whimper.

The surgeon encouraged her: "Nay, we are all friends," he whispered, paternally.

She half parted her fingers and peered through them at Neville and Gaunt. Then she remembered all, and began to cry hysterically.

New dismay of the unprofessionals!

"Now, gentlemen, if you will lend me your flasks," said Mr. Islip, mighty calmly.

Griffith and Neville were instantly at his side, each with a flask.

The surgeon administered snow and brandy.

"Don't you know?" whispered the other in return. "Why, Mistress Peyton herself."

"What! the girl it is all about? Well, I never heard of such a thing: the *causa belli* to come galloping and swooning on the field of battle, and so stop the fighting! What will our la-



[Page 27.]

"She drew up in the middle, right between the leveled pistols."

Kate sipped these, and gulped down her sobs, and at last cried composedly.

But when it came to sipping brandied snow and crying comfortably, Major Rickards's anxiety gave place to curiosity. Without taking his eye off her, he beckoned Mr. Hammersley apart, and whispered, "Who the deuce is it?"

dies do next? By heaven! she is worth fighting for, though. Which is the happy man, I wonder? She doesn't look at either of them."

"Ah!" said the gentleman, "that is more than I know, more than Neville knows, more than any body knows."

"Bet you a guinea *she* knows, and lets it out

before she leaves the field," said Major Rickards.

Mr. Hammersley objected to an even bet, but said he would venture one to three she did not. It was an age of bets.

"Done!" said the major.

By this time Kate had risen, with Mr. Islip's assistance, and was now standing with her hand upon the piebald's mane. She saw Rickards and Hammersley were whispering about her, and she felt very uneasy; so she told Mr. Islip, timidly, she desired to explain her conduct to *all* the gentlemen present, and avert false reports.

They were soon all about her, and she began, with the most engaging embarrassment, by making excuses for her weakness. She said she had ridden all the way from home fasting; that was what had upset her. The gentlemen took the cue directly, and vowed eagerly and unanimously it was enough to upset a porter.

"But, indeed," resumed Kate, blushing, "I did not come here to make a fuss, and be troublesome, but to prevent mischief, and clear up the strangest misunderstanding between two worthy gentlemen, that are, both of them, my good friends."

She paused, and there was a chilling silence: every body felt she was getting on ticklish ground now. She knew that well enough herself. But she had a good rudder to steer by, called Mother-wit.

Says she with inimitable coolness,

"Mr. Gaunt is an old friend of mine, and a little too sensitive where I am concerned. Some chatterbox has been and told him Mr. Neville should say I have changed horses with him; and on that the gossips put their own construction. Mr. Gaunt hears all this, and applies insulting terms to Mr. Neville. Nay, do not deny it, Mr. Gaunt, for I have it here in your own handwriting."

"As for Mr. Neville, he merely defends his honor, and is little to blame. But now I shall tell the true story about these horses, and make you all ashamed of this sorry quarrel."

"Gentlemen, thus it is. A few days ago Mr. Gaunt bade me farewell, and started for foreign parts. He had not been long gone when word came from Bolton that Mr. Charlton was no more. You know how sudden it was. Consider, gentlemen: him dead, and his heir riding off to the Continent in ignorance. So I thought, 'Oh, what shall I do?' Just then Mr. Neville visited me, and I told him. On that he offered me his piebald horse to carry the news after Mr. Gaunt, because my gray was too tired: it was the day we drew Yew-tree Brow, and crossed Harrowden Brook, you know—"

Griffith interrupted her.

"Stay a bit," said he: "this is news to me. You never told me he had lent you the piebald nag to do me a good turn."

"Did I not?" said Kate, mighty innocently. "Well, but I tell you now. Ask him: he can not deny it. As for the rest, it was all done in a hurry. Mr. Neville had no horse now to ride home with; he did me the justice to think I should be very ill pleased were he to trudge home afoot and suffer for his courtesy, so he borrowed my gray to keep him out of the mire; and, indeed, the ways were fouler than usual, with the rains. Was there any ill in all this? HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE! say I."

The gentlemen all sided loudly with her on this appeal, except Neville, who held his tongue, and smiled at her plausibility, and Griffith, who hung his head at her siding with Neville.

At last he spoke, and said, sorrowfully, "If you did exchange horses with him, of course I have only to ask his pardon—and go."

Catharine reflected a moment before she replied.

"Well," said she, "I did exchange, and I did not. Why quarrel about a word? Certainly he took my horse, and I took his, but it was only for the nonce. Mr. Neville is foreign bred, and an example to us all: he knows his piebald is worth two of my gray, and so he was too fine a gentleman to send me back my old hunter and ask for his young charger. He waited for me to do that; and if any body deserves to be shot, it must be Me. But, dear heart, I did not foresee all this fuss; I said to myself, 'La! Mr. Neville will be sure to call on my father or me some day, or else I shall be out on the piebald and meet him on the gray, and then we can each take our own again.' Was I so far out in my reckoning? Is not that my Rosinante yonder? Here, Tom Leicester, you put my side-saddle on that gray horse, and the man's saddle on the piebald there. And now, Griffith Gaunt, it is your turn: you must withdraw your injurious terms, and end this superlative folly."

Griffith hesitated.

"Come," said Kate, "consider: Mr. Neville is esteemed by all the county; you are the only gentleman in it who has ever uttered a disparaging word against him. Are you sure you are more free from passion and prejudice, and wiser than all the county? Oblige me and do what is right. Come, Griffith Gaunt, let your reason unsay the barbarous words your passion hath uttered against a worthy gentleman whom we all esteem."

Her habitual influence, and these last words, spoken with gentle and persuasive dignity, turned the scale. Griffith turned to Neville, and said in a low voice that he began to fear he had been hasty, and used harsher words than the occasion justified: he was going to stammer out something more, but Neville interrupted him with a noble gesture.

"That is enough, Mr. Gaunt," said he. "I do not feel quite blameless in the matter, and have no wish to mortify an honorable adversary unnecessarily."

"Very handsomely said," put in Major Rickards; "and now let me have a word. I say that both gentlemen have conducted themselves like men—under fire; and that honor is satisfied, and the misunderstanding at an end. As for my principal here, he has shown he can fight, and now he has shown he can hear reason against himself, when the lips of beauty utter it. I approve his conduct from first to last, and am ready to defend it in all companies, and in the field, should it ever be impugned."

Kate colored with pleasure, and gave her hand eloquently to the major. He bowed over it, and kissed the tips of her fingers.

"Oh, sir," she said, looking on him now as a friend, "I dreamed I saw Mr. Neville lying dead upon the snow, with the blood trickling from his temple."

At this, Neville's dark cheek glowed with pleas-

ure. So! it was her anxiety on *his* account had brought her here.

Griffith heard too, and sighed patiently.

Assured by Major Rickards that there neither could nor should be any more fighting, Kate made her adieus, mounted her gray horse, and rode off, discreetly declining all attendance. She beckoned Tom Leicester, however. But he pretended not to see the signal, and let her go alone. His motive for lingering behind was characteristic, and will transpire shortly.

As soon as she was gone, Griffith Gaunt quietly reminded the surgeon that there was a bullet in his arm all this time.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Islip, "I forgot that, I was so taken up with the lady."

Griffith's coat was now taken off, and the bullet searched for: it had entered the fleshy part of his arm below the elbow, and, passing round the bone, projected just under the skin. The surgeon made a slight incision, and then, pressing with his finger and thumb, out it rolled. Griffith put it in his pocket.

Neville had remained out of civility, and now congratulated his late antagonist and himself that it was no worse.

The last words that passed between the rivals on this occasion were worth recording, and characteristic of the time.

Neville addressed Gaunt with elaborate courtesy, and to this effect:

"I find myself in a difficulty, sir. You did me the honor to invite me to Mr. Charlton's funeral, and I accepted; but now I fear to intrude a guest, the sight of whom may be disagreeable to you. And, on the other hand, my absence might be misconstrued as a mark of disrespect, or of a petty hostility I am far from feeling. Be pleased, therefore, to dispose of me entirely in this matter."

Griffith reflected.

"Sir," said he, "there is an old saying, 'Let every tub stand on its own-bottom.' The deceased wished you to follow him to the grave, and therefore I would on no account have you absent. Besides, now I think of it, there will be less gossip about this unfortunate business if our neighbors see you under my roof, and treated with due consideration there, as you will be."

"I do not doubt that, sir, from so manly an adversary; and I shall do myself the honor to come."

Such was Neville's reply. The rivals then saluted each other profoundly, and parted.

Hammersley and Rickards lingered behind their principals to settle their little bet about Kate's affections; and, by-the-by, they were indiscreet enough to discuss this delicate matter within a dozen yards of Tom Leicester: they forgot that "little pitchers have long ears."

Catharine Peyton rode slowly home, and thought it all over as she went, and worried herself finely. She was one that winced at notoriety, and she could not hope to escape it now. How the gossips would talk about her! They would say the gentlemen had fought about *her*, and she had parted them for love of one of them. And then the gentlemen themselves! The strict neutrality she had endeavored to maintain on Scutchemsee Nob, in order to make peace, would it not keep them both her suitors? She foresaw

she should be pulled to pieces, and live in hot water, and be "the talk of the county."

There were but two ways out: she must marry one of them, and petition the other not to shoot him; or else she must take the veil, and so escape them both.

She preferred the latter alternative. She was more enthusiastic in religion than in any earthly thing; and now the angry passions of men thrust her the same road that her own devout mind had always drawn her.

As soon as she got home, she sent a message to Father Francis, who drove her conscience, and begged him to come and advise her.

After that she did the wisest thing, perhaps, she had done all day—went to bed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE sun was just setting when Catharine's maid came into her room and told her Father Francis was below. She sent down to say she counted on his sleeping at Peyton Hall, and she would come down to him in half an hour. She then ordered a refectio to be prepared for him in her boudoir, and made her toilet with all reasonable speed, not to keep him waiting. Her face beamed with quiet complacency now, for the holy man's very presence in the house was a comfort to her.

Father Francis was a very stout, muscular man, with a ruddy countenance; he never wore gloves, and you saw at once he was not a gentleman by birth. He had a fine voice: it was deep, mellow, and, when he chose, sonorous. This, and his person, ample, but not obese, gave him great weight, especially with his female pupils. If he was not quite so much revered by the men, yet he was both respected and liked; in fact, he had qualities that make men welcome in every situation—good humor, good sense, and tact. A good son of his Church, and early trained to let no occasion slip of advancing her interests.

I wish my readers could have seen the meeting between Catharine Peyton and this burly ecclesiastic. She came into the drawing-room with that imperious air and carriage which had made her so unpopular with her own sex, and at the bare sight of Father Francis, drooped and bent in a moment as she walked, and her whole body indicated a submissiveness, graceful, but rather abject: it was as if a young poplar should turn to a weeping willow in half a moment. Thus metamorphosed, the Beauty of Cumberland glided up to Francis, and sank slowly on her knees before him, crossed her hands on her bosom, lowered her lovely head, and awaited his benediction.

The father laid two big, coarse hands, with enormous fingers, on that thorough-bred head and golden hair, and blessed her business-like.

"The hand of less employment hath the daintier sense."—*Shakespeare*.

Father Francis blessed so many of these pretty creatures every week that he had long outgrown your fine, romantic way of blessing a body. (We manage these things better in the theatre.) Then he lent her his hand to rise, and asked her in what she required his direction at present.

"In that which shall decide my whole life," said she.

Francis responded by a look of paternal interest.

"But first," murmured she, "let me confess to you, and obtain absolution, if I may. Ah! father, my sins have been many since last confession."

"Be it so," said Father Francis, resignedly. "Confession is the best preface to Direction." And he seated himself with a certain change of manner, an easy assumption of authority.

"Nay, rather," suggested the lady, "we shall be more private in my room."

"As you will, Mistress Catharine Peyton," said the priest, returning to his usual manner.

So then the fair penitent led her spiritual judge captive up another flight of stairs, and into her little boudoir. A cheerful wood fire crackled and flamed up the chimney, and a cloth had been laid on a side-table: cold turkey and chine graced the board, and a huge glass magnum of purple Burgundy glowed and shone in the rays of the cheery fire.

Father Francis felt cozy at the sight, and at once accepted Kate's invitation to take some nourishment before entering on the labor of listening to the catalogue of her crimes. "I fasted yesterday," he muttered; and the zeal with which he attacked the viands rendered the statement highly credible.

He invited Kate to join him, but she declined. He returned more than once to the succulent meats, and washed all down with a pint of the fine old Burgundy, perfumed and purple. Meantime she of the laity sat looking into the fire with heavenly-minded eyes.

At last, with a gentle sigh of content, the ghostly father installed himself in an arm-chair by the fire, and invited his penitent to begin.

She took a footstool and brought it to his side, so that, in confessing her blacker vices, she might be able to whisper them in his very ear. She knelt on her little footstool, put her hands across her breast, and in this lowly attitude murmured softly after this fashion, with a contrite voice:

"I have to accuse myself of many vices. Alas! in one short fortnight I have accumulated the wickedness of a life. I have committed the seven deadly sins. I have been guilty of Pride, Wrath, Envy, Disobedience, Immodesty, Vanity, Concupiscence, Fibs—"

"Gently, daughter," said the priest, quietly; "these terms are too general: give me instances. Let us begin with Wrath: ah! we are all prone to that."

The fair penitent sighed and said;

"Especially me. Example: I was angry beyond reason with my maid, Ruth. (She does comb my hair so uncouthly!) So, then, the other night, when I was in trouble, and most needed soothing by being combed womanly, she gets thinking of Harry, that helps in the stable, and she tears away at my hair. I started up and screamed out, 'Oh, you clumsy thing! go curry-comb my horse, and send that oaf your head is running on to handle my hair.' And I told her my grandam would have whipped her well for it, but nowadays mistresses were the only sufferers: we had lost the use of our hands, we are grown so squeamish. And I stamped like a fury, and

said, 'Get you gone out of the room!' and 'I hated the sight of her!' And the poor girl went from me, crying, without a word, being a better Christian than her mistress. *Mea culpa! mea culpa!*"

"Did you slap her?"

"Nay, father, not so bad as that."

"Are you quite sure you did not slap her?" asked Francis, quietly.

"Nay. But I had a mind to. My heart slapped her, if my hand forbore. Alas!"

"Had she hurt you?"

"That she did—but only my head. I hurt her heart; for the poor wench loves me dear, the Lord knows for what."

"Humph! proceed to pride."

"Yes, father. I do confess that I was greatly puffed up with the praises of men. I was proud of the sorriest things: of jumping a brook, when 'twas my horse jumped it, and had jumped it better with a fly on his back than the poor worm Me; of my good looks, forgetting that God gave them me; and, besides, I am no beauty, when all is done; it is all their flattery. And at my Lady Munster's dinner I pridefully walked out before Mistress Davies, the rich cheesemonger's wife, that is as proud of her money as I of my old blood (God forgive two fools!), which I had no right to do—a maid to walk before a wife; and oh, father, I whispered the gentleman who led me out—it was Mr. Neville—"

Here the penitent put one hand before her face, and hesitated.

"Well, daughter, half confession is no confession. You said to Mr. Neville—"

"I said, 'Nothing comes after cheese.'"

This revelation was made most dolefully.

"It was pert and unbecoming," said Father Francis, gravely, though a twinkle in his eye showed that he was not so profoundly shocked as his penitent appeared to be. "But go to graver matters. Immodesty, said you? I shall be very sorry if this is so. You did not use to be immodest."

"Well, father, I hope I have not altogether laid aside modesty, otherwise it would be time for me to die, let alone to confess; but sure it can not be modest of me to ride after a gentleman and take him a letter. And then that was not enough: I heard of a duel, and what did I do but ride to Scutchemsee Nob, and interfere? What gentleman was ever so bold? I was not their wife, you know—neither of them's."

"Humph!" said the priest, "I have already heard a whisper of this, but told to your credit. *Beati pacifici*: Blessed are the peacemakers. You had better lay that matter before me by-and-by, as your director. As your confessor, tell me why you accuse yourself of concupiscence."

"Alas!" said the young lady, "scarcely a day passes that I do not offend in that respect. Example: last Friday, dining abroad, the cooks sent up a dish of collops. Oh, father, they smelt so nice! and I had been a-hunting. First I smelt them, and that I couldn't help; but then I forgot *custodia oculorum*, and I eyed them; and the next thing was, presently—somehow—two of 'em were on my plate."

"Very wrong," said Francis; "but that is a harsher term than I should have applied to this longing of a hungry woman for collops o' Friday. Pray, what do you understand by that big word?"

"Why, you explained it yourself in your last sermon. It means 'unruly and inordinate desires.' Example: Edith Hammersley told me I was mad to ride in scarlet, and me so fair and my hair so light. 'Green or purple is your color,' says she; and soon after this didn't I see in Stanhope town the loveliest piece of purple broadcloth? Oh, father, it had a gloss like velvet, and the sun did so shine on it as it lay in the shop-window; it was fit for a king or a bishop; and I stood and gloated on it, and pined for it, and died for it, and down went the Tenth Commandment."

"Ah!" said Francis, "the hearts of women are set on vanity! But tell me—these unruly affections of yours, are they ever fixed on persons of the other sex?"

The fair sinner reflected.

"On gentlemen?" said she. "Why, they come pestering of their own accord. No, no—I could do without *them* very well. What I sinfully pine for is meat on a Friday assure as ever the day comes round, and high-couraged horses to ride, and fine clothes to wear every day in the week. *Mea culpa! mea culpa!*"

Such being the dismal state of things, Francis slyly requested her to leave the seven deadly sins in peace, and go to her small offenses; for he argued, shrewdly enough, that, since her sins were peccadilloes, perhaps some of her peccadilloes might turn out to be sins.

"Small!" cried the culprit, turning red, "they are none of them small."

I really think she was jealous of her reputation as a sinner of high degree.

However, she complied, and, putting up her mouth, murmured a miscellaneous confession without end. The accents were soft and musical, like a babbling brook; and the sins, such as they were, poor things! rippled on in endless rotation.

Now nothing tends more to repose than a purling brook, and ere long something sonorous let the fair culprit know she had lulled her confessor asleep.

She stopped, indignant. But at that he instantly awoke (*sublatâ causâ, tollitur effectus*), and addressed her thus, with sudden dignity, "My daughter, you will fast on Monday next, and say two Aves and a Credo. *Absolvo te.*"

"And now," said he, "as I am a practical man, let us get back from the imaginary world into the real. Speak to me at present as your director; and mind, you must be serious now, and call things by their right names."

Upon this Kate took a seat, and told her story, and showed him the difficulty she was in.

She then reminded him that, notwithstanding her unfortunate itch for the seven deadly sins, she was a good Catholic, a zealous daughter of the Church; and she let him know her desire to retire from both lovers into a convent, and so, freed from the world and its temptations, yield up her soul entire to celestial peace and divine contemplation.

"Not so fast," said the priest. "Even zeal is naught without obedience. If you could serve the Church better than by going into a convent, would you be willful?"

"Oh no, father! But how can I serve the Church better than by renouncing the world?"

"Perhaps by remaining in the world, as she

herself does—and by making converts to the faith. You could hardly serve her worse than by going into a convent; for our convents are poor, and you have no means; you would be a charge. No, daughter, we want no poor nuns; we have enough of them. If you are, as I think, a true and zealous daughter of the Church, you must marry, and instill the true faith, with all a mother's art, a mother's tenderness, into your children. Then the heir to your husband's estates will be a Catholic, and so the true faith get rooted in the soil."

"Alas!" said Catharine, "are we to look but to the worldly interests of the Church?"

"They are inseparable from her spiritual interests here on earth; our souls are not more bound to our bodies."

Catharine was deeply mortified.

"So the Church rejects me because I am poor," said she, with a sigh.

"The Church rejects you not, but only the convent. No place is less fit for you. You have a high spirit, and high religious sentiments; both would be mortified and shocked in a nunnery. Think you that convent-walls can shut out temptation? I know them better than you: they are strong-holds of vanity, folly, tittle-tattle, and all the meanest vices of your sex. Nay, I forbid you to think of it: show me now your faith by your obedience."

"You are harsh to me, father," said Catharine, piteously.

"I am firm. You are one that needs a tight hand, mistress. Come, now, humility and obedience, these are the Christian graces that best become your youth. Say, can the Church, through me, its minister, count on these from you? or" (suddenly letting loose his diapsion) "did you send for me to ask advice, and yet go your own way, hiding a high stomach and a willful heart under a show of humility?"

Catharine looked at Father Francis with dismay. This was the first time that easy-going priest had shown her how impressive he could be. She was downright frightened, and said she hoped she knew better than to defy her director; she laid her will at his feet, and would obey him like a child, as was her duty.

"Now I know my daughter again," said he, and gave her his horrible paw, the which she kissed very humbly, and that matter was settled to her entire dissatisfaction.

Soon after that they were both summoned to supper; but as they went down, Kate's maid drew her aside and told her a young man wanted to speak to her.

"A young man?" screamed Kate. "Hang young men! They have got me a fine scolding just now! Which is it, pray?"

"He is a stranger to me."

"Perhaps he comes with a message from some fool. You may bring him to me in the hall, and stay with us: it may be a thief, for aught I know."

The maid soon reappeared, followed by Mr. Thomas Leicester.

That young worthy had lingered on Seutchemsee Nob to extract the last drop of enjoyment from the situation by setting up his hat at ten paces, and firing the gentlemen's pistols at it. I despair of conveying to any rational reader the satisfaction, keen, though brief, this

afforded him; it was a new sensation: gentlemen's guns he had fired many, but dueling-pistols not one, till that bright hour.

He was now come to remind Catharine of his pecuniary claims. Luckily for him, she was one who did not need to be reminded of her promises.

"Oh, it is you, child!" said she. "Well, I'll be as good as my word."

She then dismissed her maid, and went up stairs, and soon returned with two guineas, a crown piece, and three shillings in her hand.

"There," said she, smiling, "I am sorry for you, but that is all the money I have in the world."

The boy's eyes glittered at sight of the coin: he rammed the silver into his pocket with hungry rapidity, but he shook his head about the gold.

"I'm afeard o' these," said he, and eyed them mistrustfully in his palm. "These be the friends that get you your throat cut o' dark nights. Mistress, please you keep 'em for me, and let me have a shilling now and then when I'm dry."

"Nay," said Kate, "but are you not afraid I shall spend your money, now I have none left of my own?"

Tom seemed quite struck with the reasonableness of this observation, and hesitated. However, he concluded to risk it.

"You don't look one of the sort to wrong a poor fellow," said he; "and, besides, you'll have brass to spare of your own before long, I know."

Kate opened her eyes.

"Oh, indeed!" said she; "and, pray, how do you know that?"

Mr. Leicester favored her with a knowing wink. He gave her a moment to digest this, and then said, almost in a whisper, "Hearkened the gentlefolks on Scutchensee Nob after you was gone home, mistress."

Kate was annoyed.

"What! they must be prating as soon as one's back is turned! Talk of women's tongues! Now what did they say, I should like to know?"

"It was about the bet, ye know."

"A bet? Oh, that is no affair of mine."

"Ay, but it is. Why, 'twas you they were betting on. Seems that old soger and Squire Hammersley had laid three guineas to one that you should let out which was your fancy of them two."

Kate's cheeks were red as fire now; but her delicacy overpowered her curiosity, and she would not put any more questions. To be sure, young Hopeful needed none; he was naturally a chatterbox, and he proceeded to tell her that, as soon as ever she was gone, Squire Hammersley took a guinea and offered it to the old soger, and told him he had won, and the old soger pocketed it. But after that, somehow, Squire Hammersley let drop that Mr. Neville was the favorite.

"Then," continued Mr. Leicester, "what does the old soger do but pull out guinea again, and says he, 'You must have this back; bet is not won; for you do think 'tis Neville; now I do think 'tis Gaunt.'"

"So then they fell to argufying and talking a lot o' stuff."

"No doubt, the insolent meddlers! Can you

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remember any of their nonsense?—not that it is worth remembering, I'll be bound."

"Let me see. Well, Squire Hammersley, he said you owned to dreaming of Squire Neville, and that was a sign of love, said he; and, besides, you sided with him against t'other. But the old soger, he said you called Squire Gaunt 'Griffith'; and he built on that. Oh, and a said you changed the horses back to please our squire. Says he,

"You must look to what the lady did; never heed what she said. Why, their sweet lips was only made to kiss us, and deceive us," says that there old soger."

"I'll—I'll— And what did you say, sir?—for I suppose your tongue was not idle."

"Oh, me? I never let 'em know I was hearkening, or they'd have 'greed in a moment for to give me a hiding. Besides, I had no need to cudgel my brains; I'd only to ask you plump. You'll tell me, I know. Which is it, mistress? I'm for Gaunt, you know, in course. Alack, mistress," gabbled this voluble youth, "sure you won't be so hard as sack my squire, and him got a bullet in his carcass, for love of you, this day."

Kate started, and looked at him in surprise.

"Oh," said she, "a bullet! Did they fight again the moment they saw my back was turned? The cowards!"

And she began to tremble.

"No, no," said Tom, "that was done before ever you came up. Don't ye remember that single shot while we were climbing the Nob? Well, 'twas Squire Gaunt got it in the arm that time."

"Oh!"

"But, I say, wasn't our man game? Never let out he was hit while you was there; but as soon as ever you was gone, they cut the bullet out of him, and I seen it."

"Ah! ah!"

"Doctor takes out his knife—precious sharp and shiny 'twas!—cuts into his arm with no more ado than if he was carving a pullet—out squirts the blood, a good un."

"Oh, no more! no more! You cruel boy! how could you bear to look?" And Kate hid her own face with both hands.

"Why, 'twasn't my skin as was cut into. Squire Gaunt, he never hollered; a winced, though, and ground his teeth; but 'twas over in a minute, and the bullet in his hand."

"That is for my wife," says he, "if ever I have one, and puts it in his pocket."

"Why, mistress, you be as white as your smock!"

"No, no! Did he faint, poor soul?"

"Not he! What was there to faint about?"

"Then why do I feel so sick, even to hear of it?"

"Because you ha'n't got no stomach," said the boy, contemptuously. "Your courage is skin-deep, I'm thinking. However, I'm glad you feel for our squire about the bullet; so now I hope you will wed with him, and sack Squire Neville. Then you and I shall be kind o' kin: Squire Gaunt's feyther was my feyther. That makes you stare, mistress. Why, all the folk do know it. Look at this here little mole on my forehead. Squire Gaunt have got the fellow to that."

At this crisis of his argument he suddenly

caught a glimpse of his personal interest; instantly he ceased his advocacy of Squire Gaunt, and became ludicrously impartial.

"Well, mistress, wed whichever you like," said he, with sublime indifference; "only whichever you *do* wed, prithee speak a word to the gentleman, and get me to be his gamekeeper. I'd liefer be your goodman's gamekeeper than King of England."

He was proceeding with vast volubility to enumerate his qualifications for that confidential post, when the lady cut him short, and told him to go and get his supper in the kitchen, for she was wanted elsewhere. He made a scrape, and clattered away with his hobnailed shoes.

Kate went to the hall window and opened it, and let the cold air blow over her face.

Her heart was touched, and her bosom filled with pity for her old sweetheart.

How hard she had been! She had sided with Neville against the wounded man. And she thought how sadly and patiently he had submitted to her decision—and a bullet in his poor arm all the time.

The gentle bosom heaved and heaved, and the tears began to run.

She entered the dining-room timidly, expecting some comment on her discourteous absence. Instead of that, both her father and her director rose respectfully, and received her with kind and affectionate looks. They then pressed her to eat this and that, and were remarkably attentive and kind. She could see she was deep in their good books. This pleased her; but she watched quietly, after the manner of her sex, to learn what it was all about. Nor was she left long in the dark. Remarks were made that hit her, though they were none of them addressed to her.

Father Francis delivered quite a little homily on Obedience, and said how happy a thing it was when zeal, a virtue none too common in these degenerate days, was found tempered by humility, and subservient to ghostly counsel and authority.

Mr. Peyton dealt in no general topics of that kind; his discourse was secular: it ran upon Neville's Cross, Neville's Court, and the Baronetcy; and he showed Francis how and why this title must sooner or later come to George Neville and the heirs of his body.

Francis joined in this topic for a while, but speedily diverged into what might be called a collateral theme. He described to Kate a delightful spot on the Neville estate where a nunnery might be built and endowed by any good Catholic lady having zeal, and influence with the owner of the estate, and with the lord lieutenant of the county.

"It is three parts an island (for the River Wey curls round it lovingly), but backed by wooded slopes that keep off the north and east winds: a hidden and balmy place, such as the forefathers of the Church did use to choose for their rustic abbeys, whose ruins still survive to remind us of the pious and glorious days gone by. Trout and salmon come swimming to the door; hawthorn and woodbine are as rife there as weeds be in some parts; two broad oaks stand on turf like velvet, and ring with song-birds. A spot by nature sweet, calm, and holy—good for pious exercises and heavenly contemplation: *there*, methinks, if it be God's will I should see

old age, I would love to end my own days, at peace with Heaven and with all mankind."

Kate was much moved by this picture, and her clasped hands and glistening eyes showed the glory and delight it would be to her to build a convent on so lovely a spot. But her words were vague. "How sweet! how sweet!" was all she committed herself to. For, after what Tom Leicester had just told her, she hardly knew what to say, or what to think, or what to do; she felt she had become a mere puppet, first drawn one way, then another.

One thing appeared pretty clear to her now: Father Francis did not mean her to choose between her two lovers; he was good enough to relieve her of that difficulty by choosing for her. She was to marry Neville.

She retired to rest directly after supper, for she was thoroughly worn out. And the moment she rose to go, her father bounced up, and lighted the bed-candle for her with novel fervor, and kissed her on the cheek, and said in her ear, "Good-night, my Lady Neville!"

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT with the day's excitement, and a sweet, secluded convent in her soul, and a bullet in her bosom, and a ringing in her ear, that sounded mighty like "Lady Neville! Lady Neville! Lady Neville!" Kate spent a restless night, and woke with a bad headache.

She sent her maid to excuse her, on this score, from going to Bolton Hall. But she was informed in reply that the carriage had been got ready expressly for her, so she must be good enough to shake off disease and go; the air would do her a deal more good than lying abed.

Thereupon she dressed herself in her black silk gown and came down, looking pale and languid, but still quite lovely enough to discharge what in this age of cant I suppose we should call "her mission;" *videlicet*, to set honest men by the ears.

At half past eight o'clock the carriage came round to the front door. Its body, all glorious with the Peyton armorials and with patches of rusty gilding, swung exceedingly loose on long leathern straps instead of springs; and the fore wheels were a mile from the hind wheels, more or less. A pretentious and horrible engine—drawn by four horses—only two of them being ponies impaired the symmetry and majestic beauty of the pageant. Old Joe drove the wheelers; his boy rode the leaders, and every now and then got off and kicked them in the pits of their stomachs, or pierced them with hedge-stakes, to rouse their mettle. Thus encouraged and stimulated, they effected an average of four miles and a half per hour, notwithstanding the snow, and reached Bolton just in time. At the lodge, Francis got out and lay in ambush—but only for a time. He did not think it orthodox to be present at a religious ceremony of his Protestant friends, nor common-sense-o-dox to turn his back upon their dinner.

The carriage drew up at the hall door. It was wide open, and the hall lined with servants, male and female, in black. In the midst, between these two rows, stood Griffith Gaunt, bareheaded, to welcome the guests. His arm

was in a sling. He had received all the others in the middle of the hall, but he came to the threshold to meet Kate and her father. He bowed low and respectfully, then gave his left hand to Kate to conduct her, after the formal fashion of the day. The sight of his arm in a sling startled and affected her; and with him giving her his hand almost at the same moment, she pressed it, or indeed squeezed it nervously, and it was in her heart to say something kind and womanly; but her father was close behind, and she was afraid of saying something too kind, if she said any thing at all, so Griffith only got a little gentle nervous pinch. But that was more than he expected, and sent a thrill of delight through him; his brown eyes replied with a volume, and holding her hand up in the air as high as her ear, and keeping at an incredible distance, he led her solemnly to a room where the other ladies were, and left her there with a profound bow.

The Peytons were nearly the last persons expected, and soon after their arrival the funeral procession formed. This part was entirely arranged by the undertaker. The monstrous custom of forbidding ladies to follow their dead had not yet occurred even to the idiots of the nation, and Mr. Peyton and his daughter were placed in the second carriage. The first contained Griffith Gaunt alone, as head mourner. But the Peytons were not alone: no other relation of the deceased being present, the undertaker put Mr. Neville with the Peytons, because he was heir to a baronetcy.

Kate was much startled and astonished to see him come out into the hall. But when he entered the carriage she welcomed him warmly. "Oh, I am so glad to see you here!" said she.

"Guess by that what my delight at meeting you must be," said he.

She blushed and turned it off. "I mean, that your coming here gives me good hopes there will be no more mischief." She then lowered her voice, and begged him on no account to tell her papa of her ride to Scutchemsee Nob.

"Not a word," said George. He knew the advantage of sharing a secret with a fair lady. He proceeded to whisper something very warm in her ear: she listened to some of it, but then remonstrated, and said, "Are you not ashamed to go on so at a funeral? Oh, do pray leave compliments a moment, and think of your latter end."

He took this suggestion, as indeed he did every thing from her, in good part, and composed his visage into a decent gravity.

Soon after this they reached the church, and buried the deceased in his family vault.

People who are not bereaved by the death are always inclined to chatter coming home from a funeral. Kate now talked to Neville of her own accord, and asked him if he had spoken to his host. He said yes, and, more than that, had come to a clear understanding with him. "We agreed that it was no use fighting for you. I said, if either of us two was to kill the other, it did not follow you would wed the survivor."

"Me wed the wretch!" said Kate. "I should abhor him, and go into a convent in spite of you all, and end my days praying for the murdered man's soul."

"Neither of us is worth all that," suggested Neville, with an accent of conviction.

"That is certain," replied the lady, dryly; "so please not to do it."

He bade her set her mind at ease: they had both agreed to try and win her by peaceful arts.

"Then a pretty life mine will be!"

"Well, I think it will, till you decide."

"I could easily decide, if it were not for giving pain to—somebody."

"Oh, you can't help that. My sweet mistress, you are not the first that has had to choose between two worthy men. For, in sooth, I have nothing to say against my rival neither. I know him better than I did: he is a very worthy gentleman, though he is damnably in my way."

"And you are a very noble one to say so."

"And you are one of those that make a man noble: I feel that petty arts are not the way to win you, and I scorn them. Sweet Mistress Kate, I adore you! You are the best and noblest, as well as the loveliest of women!"

"Oh, hush, Mr. Neville! I am a creature of clay—and you are another—and both of us coming home from a funeral. Do think of that."

Here they were interrupted by Mr. Peyton asking Kate to lend him a shilling for the groom. Kate replied aloud that she had left her purse at home, then whispered in his ear that she had not a shilling in the world; and this was strictly true, for her little all was Tom Leicester's now. With this they reached the Hall, and the coy Kate gave both Neville and Gaunt the slip, and got among her mates. There her tongue went as fast as her neighbors', though she had just come back from a funeral.

But soon the ladies and gentlemen were all invited to the reading of the will.

And now chance, which had hitherto befriended Neville by throwing him into one carriage with Kate, gave Gaunt a turn. He found her a moment alone and near the embrasure of a window. He seized the opportunity, and asked her might he say a word in her ear. "What a question!" said she, gayly; and the next moment they had the embrasure to themselves.

"Kate," said he, hurriedly, "in a few minutes, I suppose, I shall be master of this place. Now you told me once you would rather be an abbess or a nun than marry me."

"Did I?" said Kate. "What a sensible speech! But the worst of it is, I'm never in the same mind long."

"Well," replied Griffith, "I think of all that falls from your lips, and your will is mine; only, for pity's sake, do not wed any man but me. You have known me so long—why, you know the worst of me by this time, and you have only seen the outside of him."

"Detraction! is that what you wanted to say to me?" asked Kate, freezing suddenly.

"Nay, nay, it was about the abbey. I find you can be an abbess without going and shutting yourself up and breaking one's heart. The way is, you build a convent in Ireland, and endow it; and then you send a nun over to govern it under you. Bless your heart, you can do any thing with money, and I shall have money enough before the day is over. To be sure, I *did* intend to build a kennel and keep harriers, and you know that costs a good penny; but we couldn't manage a kennel and an abbey too; so now down

goes the English kennel, and up goes the Irish abbey."

"But you are a Protestant gentleman. You could not found a nunnery."

"But my wife could. Whose business is it what she does with her money?"

"With your money, you mean."

"Nay, with hers, when I give it her with all my heart."

"Well, you astonish me," said Kate, thoughtfully. "Tell me, now, who put it into your head to bribe a poor girl in this abominable way?"

"Who put it into my head?" said Griffith, looking rather puzzled; "why, I suppose my heart put it into my head."

Kate smiled very sweetly at this answer, and a wild hope thrilled through Griffith that perhaps she might be brought to terms.

But at this crisis the lawyer from London was announced, and Griffith, as master of the house, was obliged to seat the company. He looked bitterly disappointed at the interruption, but put a good face on it, and had more chairs in, and saw them all seated, beginning with Kate and the other ladies.

The room was spacious, and the entire company sat in the form of a horse-shoe.

The London solicitor was introduced by Griffith, and bowed in a short, business-like way; seated himself in the horse-shoe aforesaid, and began to read the will aloud.

It was a lengthy document, and there is nothing to be gained by repeating every line of it. I pick out a clause here and there.

"I, Septimus Charlton, of Hernshaw Castle and Bolton Grange, in the County of Cumberland, Esquire, being of sound mind, memory, and understanding—thanks be to God—do make this my last will and testament as follows: First, I commit my soul to God who gave it, and my body to the earth from which it came. I desire my executors to discharge my funeral and testamentary expenses, my just debts, and the legacies hereinafter bequeathed, out of my personal estate."

Then followed several legacies of fifty and one hundred guineas; then several small legacies, such as the following:

"To my friend Edward Peyton, of Peyton Hall, Esquire, ten guineas to buy a mourning ring."

"To the worshipful gentlemen and ladies who shall follow my body to the grave, ten guineas each, to buy a mourning ring."

"To my wife's cousin, Griffith Gaunt, I give and bequeath the sum of two thousand pounds, the same to be paid to him within one calendar month from the date of my decease."

"And as to all my messuages, or tenements, farms, lands, hereditaments, and real estate, of what nature or what kind soever, and wheresoever situate, together with all my moneys, mortgages, chattels, furniture, plate, pictures, wine, liquors, horses, carriages, stock, and all the rest, residue, and remainder of my personal estate and effects whatsoever (after the payment of the debts and legacies hereinbefore mentioned), I give, devise, and bequeath the same to my cousin, Catharine Peyton, daughter of Edward Peyton, Esquire, of Peyton Hall, in the County of Cumber-

land, her heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, forever."

When the lawyer read out this unexpected blow, the whole company turned in their seats and looked amazed at her who in a second and a sentence was turned before their eyes from the poorest girl in Cumberland to an heiress in her own right, and proprietor of the house they sat in, the chairs they sat on, and the lawn they looked out at.

Ay, we turn to the rising sun. Very few looked at Griffith Gaunt to see how he took his mistress's good fortune, that was his calamity; yet his face was a book full of strange matter. At first a flash of loving joy crossed his countenance; but this gave way immediately to a haggard look, and that to a glare of despair.

As for the lady, she cast one deprecating glance, swifter than lightning, at him she had disinherited, and then she turned her face to marble. In vain did curious looks explore her to detect the delight such a stroke of fortune would have given to themselves. Faulty, but great of soul, and on her guard against the piercing eyes of her own sex, she sat sedate, and received her change of fortune with every appearance of cool composure and exalted indifference; and as for her dreamy eyes, they seemed thinking of heaven, or something almost as many miles away from money and land.

But the lawyer had not stopped a moment to see how people took it; he had gone steadily on through the usual formal clauses; and now he brought his monotonous voice to an end, and added, in the same breath, but in a natural and cheerful tone, "Madam, I wish you joy."

This operated like a signal. The company exploded in a body; and then they all came about the heiress, and congratulated her in turn. She courtesied politely, though somewhat coldly, but said not a word in reply till the disappointed one spoke to her.

He hung back at first. To understand his feelings, it must be remembered that, in his view of things, Kate gained nothing by this bequest compared with what he lost. As his wife, she would have been mistress of Bolton Hall, etc. But now she was placed too far above him. Sick at heart, he stood aloof while they all paid their court to her. But by-and-by he felt it would look base and hostile if he alone said nothing, so he came forward, struggling visibly for composure and manly fortitude.

The situation was piquant, and the ladies' tongues stopped in a moment, and they were all eyes and ears.

CHAPTER IX.

GRIFFITH, with an effort he had not the skill to hide, stammered out, "Miss Kate, I do wish you joy." Then, with sudden and touching earnestness, "Never did good fortune light on one so worthy of it."

"Thank you, Griffith," replied Kate, softly. (She had called him "Mr. Gaunt" in public till now.) "But money and lands do not always bring content. I think I was happier a minute ago than I feel now," said she, quietly.

The blood rushed into Griffith's face at this,

for a minute ago might mean when he and she were talking almost like lovers about to wed. He was so overcome by this, he turned on his heel, and retreated hastily to hide his emotion, and regain, if possible, composure to play his part of host in the house that was his no longer.

Kate herself soon after retired, nominally to make her toilet before dinner, but really to escape the public and think it all over.

The news of her advancement had spread like wildfire; she was waylaid at the very door by the housekeeper, who insisted on showing her her house. "Nay, never mind the house," said Kate; "just show me one room where I can wash my face and do my hair."

Mrs. Hill conducted her to the best bedroom; it was lined with tapestry, and all the colors flown; the curtains were a deadish yellow.

"Lnd! here's a colored room to show me into," said the blonde Kate; "and a black grate, too. Why not take me out o' doors and bid me wash in the snow?"

"Alack! mistress," said the woman, feeling very uneasy, "we had no orders from Mr. Gaunt to light fires *up stairs*."

"Oh, if you wait for gentlemen's orders to make your house fit to live in! You knew there were a dozen ladies coming, yet you were not woman enough to light them fires. Come, take me to your own bedroom."

The woman turned red. "Mine is but a small room, my lady," she stammered.

"But there's a fire in it," said Kate, spitefully. "You servants don't wait for gentlemen's orders to take care of yourselves."

Mrs. Hill said to herself, "I'm to leave, that's flat." However, she led the way down a passage, and opened the door of a pleasant little room in a square turret; a large bay window occupied one whole side of the room, and made it inexpressibly bright and cheerful, though rather hot and stuffy; a clear coal fire burned in the grate.

"Ah!" said Kate, "how nice! Please open those little windows, every one. I suppose you have sworn never to let wholesome air into a room. Thank you; now go and forget every cross word I have said to you—I am out of sorts, and nervous, and irritable. There, run away, my good soul, and light fires in every room; and don't you let a creature come near me, or you and I shall quarrel downright."

Mrs. Hill beat a hasty retreat. Kate locked the door and threw herself backward on the bed with such a weary recklessness and *abandon* as if she was throwing herself into the sea to end all her trouble, and burst out crying.

It was one thing to refuse to marry her old sweetheart, it was another to take his property and reduce him to poverty. But here she was doing both, and going to be persuaded to marry Neville, and swell his wealth with the very possessions she had taken from Griffith; and him wounded into the bargain for love of her. It was really too cruel. It was an accumulation of different cruelties. Her bosom revolted; she was agitated, perplexed, irritated, unhappy, and all in a tumult; and although she had but one fit of crying—to the naked eye—yet a person of her own sex would have seen that at one moment she was crying from agitated nerves, at another from worry, and at the next from pity, and then from grief.

In short, she had a good long, hearty, multi-form cry, and it relieved her swelling heart so far that she felt able to go down now, and hide her feelings, one and all, from friend and foe, to do which was unfortunately a part of her nature.

She rose and plunged her face into cold water, and then smoothed her hair.

Now, as she stood at the glass, two familiar voices came in through the open window, and arrested her attention directly. It was her father conversing with Griffith Gaunt. Kate pricked up her quick ears and listened, with her back hair in her hand. She caught the subject of their talk, only now and then she missed a word or two.

Mr. Peyton was speaking rather kindly to Griffith, and telling him he was as sorry for his disappointment as any father could be whose daughter had just come into a fortune. But then he went on and rather spoiled this by asking Griffith bluntly what on earth had ever made him think Mr. Charlton intended to leave him Bolton and Hershaw.

Griffith replied, with manifest agitation, that Mr. Charlton had repeatedly told him he was to be his heir. "Not," said Griffith, "that he meant to wrong Mistress Kate neither: poor old man, he always thought she and I should be one."

"Ah! well," said Squire Peyton, coolly, "there is an end of all that now."

At this observation Kate glided to the window, and laid her cheek on the sill to listen more closely.

But Griffith made no reply.

Mr. Peyton seemed dissatisfied at his silence, and being a person who, notwithstanding a certain superficial good-nature, saw his own side of a question very big, and his neighbor's very little, he was harder than perhaps he intended to be.

"Why, Master Gaunt," said he, "surely you would not follow my daughter now—to feed upon a woman's bread. Come, be a man; and, if you are the girl's friend, don't stand in her light. You know she can wed your betters, and clap Bolton Hall on to Neville's Court. No doubt it is a disappointment to *you*; but what can't be cured must be endured; pluck up a bit of courage, and turn your heart another way, and then I shall always be a good friend to you, and my doors open to you, come when you will."

Griffith made no reply. Kate strained her ears, but could not hear a syllable. A tremor ran through her. She was in distance farther from Griffith than her father was, but superior intelligence provided her with a bridge from her window to her old servant's mind. And now she felt that this great silence was the silence of despair.

But the squire pressed him for a definite answer, and finally insisted on one. "Come, don't be so sulky," said he; "I'm her father: give me an answer, ay or no."

Then Kate heard a violent sigh, and out rushed a torrent of words that each seemed tinged with blood from the unfortunate speaker's heart. "Old man," he almost shrieked, "what did I ever do to you, that you torment me so? Sure you were born without bowels. Begged but an hour ago, and now you must come and tell me I have lost *her* by losing house and lands! D'y'e think I need to be *told* it? She was too far

above me before, and now she is gone quite out of my reach. But why come and fling it in my face? Can't you give a poor undone man one hour to draw his breath in trouble? And when you know I have got to play the host this bitter day, and smile, and smirk, and make you all merry, with my heart breaking! O Christ, look down and pity me, for men are made of stone. Well, then, no; I will not, I can not say the word to give her up. *She will discharge me*, and then I'll fly the country and never trouble you more. And to think that one little hour ago she was so kind, and I was so happy! Ah! sir, if you were born of a woman, have a little pity, and don't speak to me of her at all, one way or other. What are you afraid of? I am a gentleman and a man, though sore my trouble: I shall not run after the lady of Bolton Hall. Why, sir, I have ordered the servants to set her chair in the middle of the table, where I shall not be able to speak to her, or even see her. Indeed I dare not look at her, for I must be merry. Merry! My arm it worries me, my head it aches, my heart is sick to death. Man! man! show me some little grace, and do not torture me more than flesh and blood can bear."

"You are mad, young sir," said the squire, sternly, "and want locking up on bread and water for a month."

"I *am* almost mad," said Griffith, humbly. "But if you would only let me alone, and not tear my heart out of my body, I could hide my agony from the whole pack of ye, and go through my part like a man. I wish I was lying where I laid my only friend this afternoon."

"Oh, I don't want to speak to you," said Peyton, angrily; "and, by the same token, don't you speak to my daughter any more."

"Well, sir, if she speaks to me, I shall be sure to speak to her, without asking your leave or any man's. But I will not force myself upon the lady of Bolton Hall; don't you think it. Only, for God's sake, let me alone. I want to be by myself." And with this he hurried away, unable to bear it any more.

Peyton gave a hostile and contemptuous snort, and also turned on his heel, and went off in the opposite direction.

The effect of this dialogue on the listener was not to melt, but exasperate her. Perhaps she had just cried away her stock of tenderness. At any rate, she rose from her ambush a very basilisk; her eyes, usually so languid, flashed fire, and her forehead was red with indignation. She bit her lip, and clenched her hands, and her little foot beat the ground swiftly.

She was still in this state when a timid tap came to the door, and Mrs. Hill asked her pardon, but dinner was ready, and the ladies and gentlemen all a waiting for her to sit down.

This reminded Kate she was the mistress of the house. She answered civilly she would be down immediately. She then took a last look in the glass, and her own face startled her.

"No," she thought, "they shall none of them know nor guess what I feel." And she stood before the glass and deliberately extracted all emotion from her countenance, and, by way of preparation, screwed on a spiteful smile.

When she had got her face to her mind, she went down stairs.

The gentlemen awaited her with impatience,

the ladies with curiosity, to see how she would comport herself in her new situation. She entered, made a formal courtesy, and was conducted to her seat by Mr. Gaunt. He placed her in the middle of the table. "I play the host for this one day," said he, with some dignity, and took the bottom of the table himself.

Mr. Hammersley was to have sat on Kate's left, but the sly Neville persuaded him to change, and so got next to his inamorata: opposite to her sat her father, Major Rickards, and others unknown to fame.

Neville was in high spirits. He had the good taste to try and hide his satisfaction at the fatal blow his rival had received, and he entirely avoided the topic; but Kate saw at once, by his demure complacency, he was delighted at the turn things had taken, and he gained nothing by it: he found her a changed girl. Cold monosyllables were all he could extract from her. He returned to the charge a hundred times with indomitable gallantry, but it was no use. Cold, haughtiness, sullen!

Her other neighbor fared little better; and, in short, the lady of the house made a vile impression. She was an iceberg—a beautiful kill-joy—a wet blanket of charming texture.

And presently Nature began to co-operate with her: long before sunset it grew prodigiously dark, and the cause was soon revealed by a fall of snow in flakes as large as a biscuit. A shiver ran through the people; and old Peyton blurted out, "I shall not go home to-night." Then he bawled across the table to his daughter: "You are at home. We will stay and take possession."

"Oh papa!" said Kate, reddening with disgust.

But, if dullness reigned around the lady of the house, it was not so every where. Loud bursts of merriment were heard at the bottom of the table. Kate glanced that way in some surprise, and found it was Griffith making the company merry—Griffith, of all people.

The laughter broke out at short intervals, and by-and-by became uproarious and constant. At last she looked at Neville inquiringly.

"Our worthy host is setting us an example of conviviality," said he. "He is getting drunk."

"Oh, I hope not," said Kate. "Has he no friend to tell him not to make a fool of himself?"

"You take a great interest in him," said Neville, bitterly.

"Of course I do. Pray, do you desert your friends when ill luck falls on them?"

"Nay, Mistress Kate, I hope not."

"You only triumph over the misfortunes of your enemies, eh?" said the stinging beauty.

"Not even that. And as for Mr. Gaunt, I am not his enemy."

"Oh no, of course not. You are his best friend. Witness his arm at this moment."

"I am his rival, but not his enemy. I'll give you a proof." Then he lowered his voice, and said in her ear, "You are grieved at his losing Bolton; and, as you are very generous and noble-minded, you are all the more grieved because his loss is your gain." (Kate blushed at this shrewd hit.) Neville went on: "You don't like him well enough to marry him; and, since you can not make him happy, it hurts your good heart to make him poor."

"It is you for reading a lady's heart," said Kate, ironically.

George proceeded steadily. "I'll show you an easy way out of this dilemma."

"Thank you," said Kate, rather insolently.

"Give Mr. Gaunt Bolton and Hernshaw, and give me—your hand."

Kate turned and looked at him with surprise; she saw by his eye it was no jest. For all that, she affected to take it as one. "That would be long and short division," said she; but her voice faltered in saying it.

"So it would," replied George, coolly; "for Bolton and Hernshaw both are not worth one finger of that hand I ask of you. But the value of things lies in the mind that weighs 'em. Mr. Gaunt, you see, values Bolton and Hernshaw very highly; why, he is in despair at losing them. Look at him; he is getting rid of his reason before your very eyes, to drown his disappointment."

"Oh! that is it, is it?" And, strange to say, she looked rather relieved.

"That is it, believe me: it is a way we men have. But, as I was saying, I don't care one straw for Bolton and Hernshaw. It is *you* I love—not your land nor your house, but your sweet self; so give me that, and let the lawyers make over this famous house and lands to Mr. Gaunt. His antagonist I have been in the field, and his rival I am and must be, but not his enemy, you see, and not his ill-wisher."

Kate was softened a little. "This is all mighty romantic," said she, "and very like a *preux chevalier*, as you are; but you know very well he would fling land and house in your face if you offered them him on these terms."

"Ay, in my face if I offered them, but not in yours if you."

"I am sure he would, all the same."

"Try him."

"What is the use?"

"Try him."

Kate showed symptoms of uneasiness. "Well, I will," said she, stoutly. "No, that I will not. You begin by bribing me, and then you would set me to bribe him."

"It is the only way to make two honest men happy."

"If I thought that—"

"You know it. Try him."

"And suppose he says nay?"

"Then we shall be no worse than we are."

"And suppose he says ay?"

"Then he will wed Bolton Hall and Hernshaw, and the pearl of England will wed me."

"I have a great mind to take you at your word," said Kate; "but no; it is really too indelicate."

George Neville fixed his eyes on her. "Are you not deceiving yourself?" said he. "Do you not like Mr. Gaunt better than you think? I begin to fear you dare not put him to this test: you fear his love would not stand it?"

Kate colored high, and tossed her head proudly. "How shrewd you gentlemen are!" she said. "Much you know of a lady's heart. Now the truth is, I don't know what might not happen were I to do what you bid me. Nay, I'm wiser than you would have me; and I'll pity Mr. Gaunt at a safe distance, if you please, sir."

Neville bowed gravely. He felt sure this was a plausible evasion, and that she really was afraid to apply his test to his rival's love.

So now, for the first time, he became silent and reserved by her side. The change was noticed by Father Francis, and he fixed a grave, remonstrating glance on Kate. She received it, understood it, affected not to notice it, and acted upon it.

Drive a donkey too hard, it kicks.

Drive a man too hard, it hits.

Drive a woman too hard, it cajoles.

Now among them they had driven Kate Peyton too hard; so she secretly formed a bold resolution, and, this done, her whole manner changed for the better. She turned to Neville, and flattered and fascinated him. The most feline of her sex could scarcely equal her *calinerie* on this occasion. But she did not confine her fascination to him. She broke out, *pro bono publico*, like the sun in April, with quips, and cranks, and dimpled smiles, and made every body near her quite forget her late hauteur and coldness, and bask in this sunny, sweet hostess. When the charm was at its height, the siren cast a seeming merry glance at Griffith, and said to a lady opposite, "Methinks some of the gentlemen will be glad to be rid of us," and so carried the ladies off to the drawing-room.

There her first act was to dismiss her smiles without ceremony, and her second was to sit down and write four lines to the gentleman at the head of the dining-table.

And he was as drunk as a fiddler.

CHAPTER X.

GRIFFITH's friends laughed heartily with him while he was getting drunk; and when he had got drunk, they laughed still louder, only at him.

They "knocked him down" for a song; and he sang a rather Anacreontic one very melodiously, and so loud that courted the servants, listening outside, derived great delectation from it; and Neville applauded ironically.

Soon after, they "knocked him down" for a story; and as it requires more brains to tell a story than to sing a song, the poor butt made an ass of himself. He maundered and wandered, and stopped, and went on, and lost one thread and took up another, and got into a perfect maze. And while he was thus entangled, a servant came in and brought him a note, and put it in his hand. The unhappy narrator received it with a sapient nod, but was too polite, or else too stupid, to open it, so closed his fingers on it, and went maundering on till his story trickled into the sand of the desert, and somehow ceased; for it could not be said to end, being a thing without head or tail.

He sat down amid derisive cheers. About five minutes afterward, in some intermittent flash of reason, he found he had got hold of something. He opened his hand, and lo, a note! On this he chuckled unreasonably, and distributed sage, cunning winks around, as if he, by special ingenuity, had caught a nightingale, or the like; then, with sudden hauteur and gravity, proceeded to examine his prize.

But he knew the handwriting at once, and it gave him a galvanic shock that half sobered him for the moment.

He opened the note, and spelled it with great difficulty. It was beautifully written, in long, clear letters; but then those letters kept dancing so!

"I much desire to speak to you before 'tis too late, but can think of no way save one. I lie in the turreted room; come under my window at nine of the clock; and prithee come sober, if you respect yourself, or

KATE."

Griffith put the note in his pocket, and tried to think; but he could not think to much purpose. Then this made him suspect he was drunk. Then he tried to be sober, but he found he could not. He sat in a sort of stupid agony, with Love and Drink battling for his brain. It was piteous to see the poor fool's struggles to regain the reason he had so madly parted with. He could not do it; and when he found that, he took up a finger-glass, and gravely poured the contents upon his head.

At this there was a burst of laughter.

This irritated Mr. Gaunt; and, with that rapid change of sentiments which marks the sober savage and the drunken European, he offered to fight a gentleman that he had been hitherto holding up to the company as his best friend. But his best friend (a very distant acquaintance) was by this time as tipsy as himself, and offered a piteous disclaimer, mingled with tears; and these maudlin drops so affected Griffith that he flung his one available arm round his best friend's head, and wept in turn, and down went both their lachrymose, empty noddles on the table. Griffith remained there; but his best friend extricated himself, and, shaking his skull, said, dolefully, "He is very drunk." This notable discovery, coming from such a quarter, caused considerable merriment.

"Let him alone," said an old toper; and Griffith remained a good hour with his head on the table. Meantime the other gentlemen soon put it out of their power to ridicule him on the score of intoxication.

Griffith, keeping quiet, got a little better, and suddenly started up with a notion he was to go to Kate this very moment. He muttered an excuse, and staggered to a glass door that led to the lawn. He opened this door, and rushed out into the open air. He thought it would set him all right; but, instead of that, it made him so much worse that presently his legs came to a misunderstanding, and he measured his length on the ground, and could not get up again, but kept slipping down.

Upon this he groaned and lay quiet.

Now there was a foot of snow on the ground, and it melted about Griffith's hot temples and flushed face, and mightily refreshed and revived him.

He sat up and kissed Kate's letter, and Love began to get the upper hand of Liquor a little.

Finally he got up and half strutted, half staggered to the turret, and stood under Kate's window.

The turret was covered with luxuriant ivy, and that ivy with snow. So the glass of the window was set in a massive frame of winter; but a bright fire burned inside the room, and this set the panes all aflame. It was cheery and glorious to see the window glow like a sheet of transparent fire in its deep frame of snow; but Griffith could not appreciate all that. He stood there a sorrowful man. The wine he had taken to drown his despair had lost its stimulating ef-

fect, and had given him a heavy head, but left him his sick heart.

He stood and puzzled his drowsy faculties why Kate had sent for him. Was it to bid him good-by forever, or to lessen his misery by telling him she would not marry another? He soon gave up cudgeling his enfeebled brains. Kate was a superior being to him, and often said things, and did things, that surprised him. She had sent for him, and that was enough. He should see her and speak to her once more, at all events. He stood, alternately nodding and looking up at her glowing room, and longing for its owner to appear. But as Bacchus had inspired him to mistake eight o'clock for nine, and as she was not a votary of Bacchus, she did not appear, and he stood there till he began to shiver.

The shadow of a female passed along the wall, and Griffith gave a great start. Then he heard the fire poked. Soon after he saw the shadow again, but it had a large servant's cap on: so his heart had beaten high for Mary or Susan. He hung his head disappointed, and, holding on by the ivy, fell a nodding again.

By-and-by one of the little casements was opened softly. He looked up, and there was the right face peering out.

Oh, what a picture she was in the moonlight and the firelight! They both fought for that fair head, and each got a share of it: the full moon's silvery beams shone on her rose-like cheeks and lifted them a shade, and lit her great gray eyes and made them gleam astoundingly; but the ruby firelight rushed at her from behind, and flowed over her golden hair, and reddened and glorified it till it seemed more than mortal. And all this in a very picture-frame of snow.

Imagine, then, how sweet and glorious she glowed on him who loved her, and who looked at her perhaps for the last time.

The sight did wonders to clear his head; he stood open-mouthed, with his heart beating. She looked him all over a moment. "Ah!" said she. Then, quietly, "I am so glad you are come." Then, kindly and regretfully, "How pale you look! you are unhappy."

This greeting, so gentle and kind, overpowered Griffith. His heart was too full to speak.

Kate waited a moment; and then, as he did not reply to her, she began to plead to him. "I hope you are not angry with me," she said. "I did not want him to leave me your estates. I would not rob you of them for the world, if I had my way."

"Angry with you!" said Griffith. "I'm not such a villain. Mr. Charlton did the right thing, and—" He could say no more.

"I do not think so," said Kate. "But don't you fret: all shall be settled to your satisfaction. I can not quite love you, but I have a sincere affection for you, and so I ought. Cheer up, dear Griffith; don't you be down-hearted about what has happened to-day."

Griffith smiled. "I don't feel unhappy," he said; "I did feel as if my heart was broken. But then you seemed parted from me. Now we are together, I feel as happy as ever. Mistress, don't you ever shut that window and leave me in the dark again. Let me stand and look at your sweet face all night, and I shall be the happiest man in Cumberland."

"Ay," said Kate, blushing at his ardor; "happy for a single night; but when I go away you will be in the dumps again, and perhaps get tipsy; as if that could mend matters! Nay, I must set your happiness on stronger legs than that. Do you know I have got permission to undo this cruel will, and let you have Bolton Hall and Hershaw again?"

Griffith looked pleased, but rather puzzled.

Kate went on, but not so glibly now. "However," said she, a little nervously, "there is one condition to it that will cost us both some pain. If you consent to accept these two estates from me, who don't value them one straw, why then—"

She hesitated.

"Well, what?" he gasped.

"Why then, my poor Griffith, we shall be bound in honor—you and I—not to meet for some months, perhaps for a whole year: in one word—do not hate me—not till you can bear to see me—another—man's—wife."

The murder being out, she hid her face in her hands directly, and in that attitude awaited his reply.

Griffith stood petrified a moment, and I don't think his intellects were even quite clear enough to take it all in at once. But at last he did comprehend it, and when he did, he just uttered a loud cry of agony, and then turned his back on her without a word.

Man does not speak by words alone. A mute glance of reproach has ere now pierced the heart a tirade would have left untouched, and even an inarticulate cry may utter volumes.

Such an eloquent cry was that with which Griffith Gaunt turned his back upon the angelical face he adored, and the soft, persuasive tongue. There was agony, there was shame, there was wrath, all in that one ejaculation.

It frightened Kate. She called him back. "Don't leave me so," she said. "I know I have affronted you, but I meant all for the best. Do not let us part in anger."

At this Griffith returned in violent agitation. "It is your fault for making me speak," he cried. "I was going away without a word, as a man should that is insulted by a woman. You heartless girl! What! you bid me sell you to that man for two dirty farms! Oh, well you know Bolton and Hershaw were but the steps by which I hoped to climb to you; and now you tell me to part with you, and take those miserable acres instead of my darling. Ah! mistress, you have never loved, or you would hate yourself and despise yourself for what you have done. Love! if you had known what that word means, you couldn't look in my face and stab me to the heart like this. God forgive you! And sure I hope he will, for, after all, it is not *your* fault that you were born without a heart. WHY, KATE, YOU ARE CRYING."

CHAPTER XI.

"CRYING!" said Kate. "I could cry my eyes out to think what I have done; but it is not my fault: they egged me on. I knew you would fling those two miserable things in my face if I did, and I said so; but they would be wiser than me, and insist on my putting you to the proof."

"They? Who is they?"

"No matter. Whoever it was, they will gain nothing by it, and you will lose nothing. Ah! Griffith, I am so ashamed of myself—and so proud of you."

"They?" repeated Griffith, suspiciously. "Who is this they?"

"What does that matter, so long as it was not Me? Are you going to be jealous again? Let us talk of you and me, and never mind who *them* is. You have rejected my proposal with just scorn, so now let me hear yours, for we must agree on something this very night. Tell me, now, what can I say or do to make you happy?"

Griffith was sore puzzled. "Alas! sweet Kate," said he, "I don't know what you can do for me now, except stay single for my sake."

"I should like nothing better," replied Kate, warmly; "but, unfortunately, they won't let me do that. Father Francis will be at me to-morrow, and insist on my marrying Mr. Neville."

"But you will refuse."

"I would, if I could but find a good excuse."

"Excuse? why, say you don't love him."

"Oh, they won't allow that for a reason."

"Then I am undone," sighed Griffith.

"No, no, you are not; if I could be brought to pretend to love somebody else. And really, if I don't quite love you, I like you too well to let you be unhappy. Besides, I can not bear to rob you of these unlucky farms: I think there is nothing I would not do rather than that. I think—I would rather—do—something very silly indeed. But I suppose you don't want me to do that now? Why don't you answer me? Why don't you say something? Are you drunk, sir, as they pretend? or are you asleep? Oh, I can't speak any plainer: this is intolerable. Mr. Gaunt, I'm going to shut the window."

Griffith got alarmed, and it sharpened his wits.

"Kate, Kate!" he cried, "what do you mean? Am I in a dream? Would you marry poor me after all?"

"How on earth can I tell till I am asked?" inquired Kate, with an air of childlike innocence, and inspecting the stars attentively.

"Kate, will you marry me?" said Griffith, all in a flutter.

"Of course I will—if you will let me," replied Kate, coolly, but rather tenderly, too.

Griffith burst into raptures. Kate listened to them with a complacent smile, then delivered herself after this fashion: "You have very little to thank me for, dear Griffith. I don't exactly downright love you, but I could not rob you of those unlucky farms, and you refuse to take them back any way but this; so what can I do? And then, for all I don't love you, I find I am always unhappy if you are unhappy, and happy when you are happy; so it comes pretty much to the same thing. I declare I am sick of giving you pain, and a little sick of crying in consequence. There, I have cried more in the last fortnight than in all my life before, and you know nothing spoils one's beauty like crying. And then you are so good, and kind, and true, and brave; and every body is so unjust and so unkind to you, papa and all. You were quite in the right about the duel, dear. He *is* an impudent puppy; and I threw dust in your eyes, and made you own you were in the wrong, and it was a great shame

of me, but it was because I liked you best. I could take liberties with *you*, dear. And you are wounded for me, and now I have disinherited you. Oh, I can't bear it, and I won't. My heart yearns for you—bleeds for you. I would rather die than you should be unhappy; I would rather follow you in rags round the world than marry a prince and make you wretched. Yes, dear, I am yours. Make me your wife, and then some day I dare say I shall love you as I ought."

She had never showed her heart to him like this before, and now it overpowered him. So, being also a little under vinous influence, he stammered out something, and then fairly blubbered for joy. Then what does Kate do but cry for company.

Presently, to her surprise, he was half way up the turret, coming to her.

"Oh, take care! take care!" she cried. "You'll break your neck."

"Nay," cried he, "I must come at you, if I die for it."

The turret was ornamented from top to bottom with short ledges consisting of half bricks. This ledge, shallow as it was, gave a slight foothold, insufficient in itself; but he grasped the strong branches of the ivy with a powerful hand, and so between the two contrived to get up and hang himself out close to her.

"Sweet mistress," said he, "put out your hand to me, for I can't take it against your will this time. I have got but one arm."

But this she declined. "No, no," said she; "you do nothing but torment and terrify me—there." And so gave it him; and he mumbled it.

This last feat won her quite. She thought no other man could have got to her there with two arms, and Griffith had done it with one. She said to herself, "How he loves me!—more than his own neck." And then she thought, "I shall be wife to a strong man; that is one comfort."

In this softened mood, she asked him demurely would he take a friend's advice.

"If that friend is you, ay."

"Then," said she, "I'll do a downright brazen thing, now my hand is in. I declare I'll tell you how to secure me. You make me plight my troth with you this minute, and exchange rings with you, *whether I like or not*; engage my honor in this foolish business, and if you do that, I really do think you will have me in spite of them all. But there—la!—am I worth all this trouble?"

Griffith did not share this chilling doubt. He poured forth his gratitude, and then told her he had got his mother's ring in his pocket. "I meant to ask you to wear it," said he.

"And why didn't you?"

"Because you became an heiress all of a sudden."

"Well, what signifies which of us has the dress, so that there is enough for both?"

"That is true," said Griffith, approving his own sentiment, but not recognizing his own words. "Here's my mother's ring on my little finger, sweet mistress. But I must ask you to draw it off, for I have but one hand."

Kate made a wry face. "Well, that is my fault," said she, "or I would not take it from you so."

She drew off his ring, and put it on her finger.

Then she gave him her largest ring, and had to put it on his little finger for him.

"You are making a very forward girl of me," said she, pouting exquisitely.

He kissed her hand while she was doing it.

"Don't you be so silly," said she; "and, you horrid creature, how you smell of wine! The bullet, please."

"The bullet!" exclaimed Griffith. "What bullet?"

"The bullet. The one you were wounded with for my sake. I am told you put it in your pocket; and I see something bulge in your waistcoat. That bullet belongs to me now."

"I think you are a witch," said he. "I do carry it about next my heart. Take it out of my waistcoat, if you will be so good."

She blushed and declined, and, with the refusal on her very lips, fished it out with her taper fingers. She eyed it with a sort of tender horror. The sight of it made her feel faint a moment. She told him so, and that she would keep it to her dying day. Presently her delicate finger found something was written on it. She did not ask him what it was, but withdrew, and examined it by her candle. Griffith had engraved it with these words:

"I LOVE KATE."

He looked through the window, and saw her examine it by the candle. As she read the inscription, her face, glorified by the light, assumed a celestial tenderness he had never seen it wear before.

She came back and leaned eloquently out as if she would fly to him. "Ah, Griffith! Griffith!" she murmured, and somehow or other their lips met, in spite of all the difficulties, and grew together in a long and tender embrace.

It was the first time she had ever given him more than her hand to kiss, and the rapture repaid him for all.

But as soon as she had made this great advance, virginal instinct suggested a proportionate retreat.

"You must go to bed," she said, austere; "you will catch your death of cold out here."

He remonstrated; she insisted. He held out; she smiled sweetly in his face, and shut the window in it pretty sharply, and disappeared. He went disconsolately down his ivy ladder. As soon as he was at the bottom, she opened the window again, and asked him demurely if he would do something to oblige her.

He replied like a lover; he was ready to be cut in pieces, drawn asunder with wild horses, and so on.

"Oh, I know you would do any thing stupid for me," said she; "but will you do something clever for a poor girl that is in a fright at what she is going to do for you?"

"Give your orders, mistress," said Griffith, "and don't talk to me of obliging you. I feel quite ashamed to hear you talk so—to-night especially."

"Well, then," said Kate, "first and foremost, I want you to throw yourself on Father Francis's neck."

"I'll throw myself on Father Francis's neck," said Griffith, stoutly. "Is that all?"

"No, nor half. Once upon his neck, you must say something. Then I had better settle the

very words, or perhaps you will make a mess of it. Say after me now: Oh Father Francis, 'tis to you I owe her."

"Oh Father Francis, 'tis to you I owe her."

"You and I are friends for life."

"You and I are friends for life."

"And, mind, there is always a bed in our home for you, and a plate at our table, and a right welcome, come when you will."

Griffith repeated this line correctly, but, when requested to say the whole, broke down. Kate had to repeat the oration a dozen times; and he said it after her, like a Sunday-school scholar, till he had it pat.

The task achieved, he inquired of her what Father Francis was to say in reply.

At this question Kate showed considerable alarm.

"Gracious heavens!" she cried, "you must not stop talking to him; he will turn you inside out, and I shall be undone. Nay, you must gable these words out, and then run away as hard as you can gallop."

"But is it true?" asked Griffith. "Is he so much my friend?"

"Hum!" said Kate, "it is quite true, and he is not at all your friend. There, don't you puzzle yourself, and pester me; but do as you are bid, or we are both undone."

Quelled by a menace so mysterious, Griffith promised blind obedience; and Kate thanked him, and bade him good-night, and ordered him peremptorily to bed.

He went.

She beckoned him back.

He came.

She leaned out, and inquired, in a soft, delicious whisper, as follows: "Are you happy, dear-est?"

"Ay, Kate, the happiest of the happy."

"Then so am I," she murmured.

And now she slowly closed the window, and gradually retired from the eyes of her enraptured lover.

CHAPTER XII.

BUT, while Griffith was thus sweetly employed, his neglected guests were dispersing, not without satirical comments on their truant host. Two or three, however, remained, and slept in the house, upon special invitation. And that invitation came from Squire Peyton. He chose to conclude that Griffith, disappointed by the will, had vacated the premises in disgust, and left him in charge of them; accordingly, he assumed the master with alacrity, and ordered beds for Neville, and Father Francis, and Major Rickards, and another. The weather was inclement, and the roads heavy; so the gentlemen thus distinguished accepted Mr. Peyton's offer cordially.

There were a great many things sung and said at the festive board in the course of the evening, but very few of them would amuse or interest the reader as they did the hearers. One thing, however, must not be passed by, as it had its consequences. Major Rickards drank bumpers apiece to the King, the Prince, Church, and State, the Army, the Navy, and Kate Peyton. By the time he got to her, two thirds of his discretion had oozed away in loyalty, *esprit du corps*, and port

wine; so he sang the young lady's praises in vinous terms, and of course immortalized the very exploit she most desired to consign to oblivion: *Arma viraginemque canebat*. He sang the duel, and in a style which I could not, consistently with the interests of literature, reproduce on a large scale. Hasten we to the concluding verses of his song.

"So then, sir, we placed our men for the third time, and, you may take my word for it, one or both of these heroes would have bit the dust at that discharge. But, by Jove, sir, just as they were going to pull trigger, in galloped your adorable daughter, and swooned off her foaming horse in the middle of us—disarmed us, sir, in a moment, melted our valor, bewitched our senses, and the great god of war had to retreat before little Cupid and the charms of beauty in distress."

"Little idiot!" observed the tender parent; and was much distempered.

He said no more about it to Major Rickards; but when they all retired for the night, he undertook to show Father Francis his room, and sat in it with him a good half hour talking about Kate.

"Here's a pretty scandal," said he. "I must marry the silly girl out of hand before this gets wind, and you must help me."

In a word, the result of the conference was that Kate should be publicly engaged to Neville to-morrow, and married to him as soon as her month's mourning should be over.

The conduct of the affair was confided to Father Francis, as having unbounded influence with her.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEXT morning Mr. Peyton was up betimes in his character of host, and ordered the servants about, and was in high spirits; only they gave place to amazement when Griffith Gaunt came down, and played the host, and was in high spirits.

Neville too watched his rival, and was puzzled at his radiancy.

So breakfast passed in general mystification. Kate, who could have thrown a light, did not come down to breakfast. She was on her defense.

She made her first appearance out of doors.

Very early in the morning, Mr. Peyton, in his quality of master, had ordered the gardener to cut and sweep the snow off the gravel walk that went round the lawn; and on this path Miss Peyton was seen walking briskly to and fro in the frosty but sunny air.

Griffith saw her first, and ran out to bid her good-morning.

Her reception of him was a farce. She made him a staid courtesy for the benefit of the three faces glued against the panes, but her words were incongruous. "You wretch," said she, "don't come here. Hide about, dearest, till you see me with Father Francis. I'll raise my hand so when you are to cuddle him, and fib. There, make me a low bow, and retire."

He obeyed, and the whole thing looked mighty formal and ceremonious from the breakfast-room.

"With your good leave, gentlemen," said Fa-

ther Francis, dryly, "I will be the next to pay my respects to her." With this he opened the window and stepped out.

Kate saw him, and felt very nervous. She met him with apparent delight.

He bestowed his morning benediction on her, and then they walked silently side by side on the gravel; and from the dining-room window it looked like any thing but what it was—a fencing match.

Father Francis was the first to break silence. He congratulated her on her good fortune, and on the advantage it might prove to the true Church.

Kate waited quietly till he had quite done, and then said, "What, I may go into a convent *now* that I can bribe the door open?"

The scratch was feline, feminine, sudden, and sharp. But, alas! Father Francis only smiled at it. Though not what we call spiritually-minded, he was a man of a Christian temper. "Not with my good-will, my daughter," said he; "I am of the same mind still, and more than ever. You must marry forthwith, and rear children in the true faith."

"What a hurry you are in."

"Your own conduct has made it necessary."

"Why, what have I done now?"

"No harm. It was a good and humane action to prevent bloodshed, but the world is not always worthy of good actions. People are beginning to make free with your name for your interfering in the duel."

Kate fired up. "Why can't people mind their own business?"

"I do not exactly know," said the priest, coolly, "nor is it worth inquiring. We must take human nature as it is, and do for the best. You must marry him, and stop their tongues."

Kate pretended to reflect. "I believe you are right," said she, at last; "and, indeed, I must do as you would have me; for, to tell the truth, in an unguarded moment, I pitied him so that I half promised I *would*."

"Indeed!" said Father Francis. "This is the first I have heard of it."

Kate replied that was no wonder, for it was only last night she had so committed herself.

"Last night!" said Father Francis; "how can that be? He was never out of my sight till we went to bed."

"Oh, there I beg to differ," said the lady. "While you were all tippling in the dining-room, he was better employed—making love by moonlight. And oh, what a terrible thing opportunity is, and the moon another! There! what with the moonlight, and my pitying him so, and all he has suffered for me, and my being rich now, and having something to give him, we two are engaged. See, else: this was his mother's ring, and he has mine."

"Mr. Neville?"

"Mr. Neville? No. My old servant, to be sure. What! do you think I would go and marry for wealth, when I have enough and to spare of my own? Oh, what an opinion you must have of me!"

Father Francis was staggered by this adroit thrust. However, after a considerable silence he recovered himself, and inquired gravely why she had given him no hint of all this the other night, when he had diverted her from a convent, and advised her to marry Neville.

"That you never did, I'll be sworn," said Kate.

Father Francis reflected.

"Not in so many words, perhaps, but I said enough to show you."

"Oh!" said Kate, "such a matter was too serious for hints and innuendoes; if you wanted me to jilt my old servant and wed an acquaintance of yesterday, why not say so plainly? I dare say I should have obeyed you, and been unhappy for life; but now my honor is solemnly engaged; my faith is pledged; and were even you to urge me to break faith and behave dishonorably, I should resist. I would liefer take poison, and die."

Father Francis looked at her steadily, and she colored to the brow.

"You are a very apt young lady," said he; "you have outwitted your director. That may be my fault as much as yours; so I advise you to provide yourself with another director whom you will be unable or unwilling to outwit."

Kate's high spirit fell before this: she turned her eyes, full of tears, on him. "Oh, do not desert me, now that I shall need you more than ever, to guide me in my new duties. Forgive me; I did not know my own heart—quite. I'll go into a convent now, if I must, but I can't marry any man but poor Griffith. Ah! father, he is more generous than any of us. Would you believe it? when he thought Bolton and Henshaw were coming to him, he said if I married him I should have the money to build a convent with. He knows how fond I am of a convent."

"He was jesting; his religion would not allow it."

"His religion!" cried Kate. Then, lifting her eyes to heaven, and looking just like an angel, "Love is *his* religion!" said she, warmly.

"Then his religion is heathenism," said the priest, grimly.

"Nay, there is too much charity in it for that," retorted Kate, keenly.

Then she looked down, like a cunning, guilty thing, and murmured, "One of the things I esteem him for is he always speaks well of *you*. To be sure, just now the poor soul thinks you are his best friend with me. But that is my fault; I as good as told him so; and it is true, after a fashion, for you kept me out of the convent that was his only real rival. Why, here he comes. Oh, father, now don't you go and tell him you side with Mr. Neville."

At this crisis Griffith, who, to tell the truth, had received a signal from Kate, rushed at Father Francis, and fell upon his neck, and said with great rapidity, "Oh, Father Francis, 'tis to you I owe her—you and I are friends for life. So long as we have a house there is a bed in it for you, and while we have a table to sit down to there's a plate at it for you, and a welcome, come when you will."

Having gabbled these words, he winked at Kate, and fled swiftly.

Father Francis was taken aback a little by this sudden burst of affection. First he stared—then he knitted his brows—then he pondered.

Kate stole a look at him, and her eyes sought the ground.

"That is the gentleman you arranged matters with last night?" said he, dryly.

"Yes," replied Kate, faintly.

"Was this scene part of the business?"
 "Oh, father!"
 "Why I ask, he did it so unnatural. Mr. Gaunt is a worthy, hospitable gentleman; he and I are very good friends; and really I never

like a puppet, and a parrot to boot, I never saw. 'Twas done so timely, too. He ran in upon our discourse. Let me see your hand, mistress. Why, where is the string with which you pulled yonder machine in so pat upon the word?"



Griffith rushed at Father Francis, and fell upon his neck.

[Page 44.]

doubted that I should be welcome in his house—until this moment."

"And can you doubt it now?"

"Almost; his manner just now was so hollow, so forced; not a word of all that came from his heart, you know."

"Then his heart is changed very lately."

The priest shook his head. "Any thing more

"Spare me!" muttered Kate, faintly.

"Then do you drop deceit and the silly cunning of your sex, and speak to me from your heart, or not at all." (Diapason.)

At this Kate began to whimper. "Father," she said, "show me some mercy." Then, suddenly clasping her hands, "HAVE PITY ON HIM, AND ON ME."

This time Nature herself seemed to speak, and the eloquent cry went clean through the priest's heart. "Ah!" said he—and his own voice trembled a little—"now you are as strong as your cunning was weak. Come, I see how it is with you; and I am human, and have been young, and a lover into the bargain, before I was a priest. There, dry thy eyes, child, and go to thy room; he thou couldst not trust shall bear the brunt for thee this once."

Then Kate bowed her fair head and kissed the horrid paw of him that had administered so severe but salutary a pat. She hurried away up stairs, right joyful at the unexpected turn things had taken.

Father Francis, thus converted to her side, lost no time; he walked into the dining-room and told Neville he had bad news for him. "Summon all your courage, my young friend," said he, with feeling, "and remember that this world is full of disappointments."

Neville said nothing, but rose and stood rather pale, waiting like a man for the blow. Its nature he more than half guessed; he had been at the window.

It fell.

"She is engaged to Gaunt since last night; and she loves him."

"The double-faced jade!" cried Peyton, with an oath.

"The heartless coquette!" groaned Neville.

Father Francis made excuses for her: "Nay, nay, she is not the first of her sex that did not know her own mind all at once. Besides, we men are blind in matters of love; perhaps a woman would have read her from the first. After all, she was not bound to give us the eyes to read a female heart."

He next reminded Neville that Gaunt had been her servant for years. "You knew that," said he, "yet you came between them—at your peril. Put yourself in his place: say you had succeeded: would not his wrong be greater than yours is now? Come, be brave; be generous; he is wounded, he is disinherited; only his love is left him: 'tis the poor man's lamb, and would you take it?"

"Oh, I have not a word to say against the man," said George, with a mighty effort.

"And what use quarreling with a woman," suggested the practical priest.

"None whatever," said George, sullenly. After a moment's silence he rang the bell feverishly. "Order my horse round directly," said he. Then he sat down, and buried his face in his hands, and did not, and could not, listen to the voice of consolation.

Now the house was full of spies in petticoats, amateur spies, that ran and told the mistress every thing of their own accord, to curry favor.

And this, no doubt, was the cause that, just as the groom walked the piebald out of the stable toward the hall door, a maid came to Father Francis with a little note: he opened it, and found these words written faintly, in a fine Italian hand:

"I scarce knew my own heart till I saw him wounded and poor, and myself rich at his expense. Entreat Mr. Neville to forgive me."

He handed the note to Neville without a word.

Neville read it, and his lip trembled; but he said nothing, and presently went out into the hall and put on his hat, for he saw his nag at the door.

Father Francis followed him, and said, sorrowfully, "What, not one word in reply to so humble a request?"

"Well, here's my reply," said George, grinding his teeth. "She knows French, though she pretends not."

'Le bruit est pour le fat, la plainte est pour le sot, L'honnête homme trompé s'éloigne et ne dit mot.' And with this he galloped furiously away.

He buried himself at Neville's Cross for several days, and would neither see nor speak to a soul. His heart was sick, his pride lacerated. He even shed some scalding tears in secret; though, to look at him, that seemed impossible.

So passed a bitter week; and in the course of it he bethought him of the tears he made a true Italian lady shed, and never pitied her a grain till now.

He was going abroad: on his desk lay a little crumpled paper. It was Kate's entreaty for forgiveness. He had ground it in his hand, and ridden away with it.

Now he was going away, he resolved to answer her.

He wrote a letter full of bitter reproaches; read it over, and tore it up.

He wrote a satirical and cutting letter; read it, and tore it up.

He wrote her a mawkish letter; read it, and tore it up.

The priest's words, scorned at first, had sunk into him a little.

He walked about the room, and tried to see it all like a by-stander.

He examined her writing closely: the pen had scarcely marked the paper. They were the timidiest strokes. The writer seemed to kneel to him. He summoned all his manhood, his fortitude, his generosity, and, above all, his high-breeding, and produced the following letter, and this one he sent:

"MISTRESS KATE,—I leave England to-day for your sake, and shall never return unless the day shall come when I can look on you but as a friend. The love that ends in hate, that is too sorry a thing to come betwixt you and me.

"If you have used me ill, your punishment is this; you have given me the right to say to you—I forgive you. GEORGE NEVILLE."

And he went straight to Italy.

Kate laid his note upon her knee, and sighed deeply, and said, "Poor fellow! How noble of him! What *can* such men, as this see in any woman to go and fall in love with her?"

Griffith found her with a tear in her eye. He took her out walking, and laid all his radiant plans of wedded life before her. She came back flushed, and beaming with complacency and beauty.

Old Peyton was brought to consent to the marriage. Only he attached one condition, that Bolton and Hershaw should be settled on Kate for her separate use.

To this Griffith assented readily; but Kate refused plump. "What, give him *myself*, and then grudge him my *estates*!" said she, with a

look of lofty and beautiful scorn at her male advisers.

But Father Francis, having regard to the temporal interests of his Church, exerted his strength and pertinacity, and tired her out; so those estates were put into trustees' hands, and tied up tight as wax.

This done, Griffith Gaunt and Kate Peyton were married, and made the finest pair that wedded in the county that year.

As the bells burst into a merry peal, and they walked out of church man and wife, their path across the church-yard was strewn thick with flowers, emblematic, no doubt, of the path of life that lay before so handsome a couple.

They spent the honeymoon in London, and tasted earthly felicity.

Yet did not quarrel after it, but subsided into the quiet complacency of wedded life.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mr. and Mrs. Gaunt lived happily together — as time went.

A fine girl and boy were born to them; and need I say how their hearts expanded and exulted, and seemed to grow twice as large?

The little boy was taken from them at three years old; and how can I convey to any but a parent the anguish of that first bereavement?

Well, they suffered it together, and that poignant grief was one tie more between them.

For many years they did not furnish any exciting or even interesting matter to this narrator. And all the better for them: without these happy periods of dullness our lives would be hell, and our hearts eternally bubbling and boiling in a huge pot made hot with thorns.

In the absence of striking incidents, it may be well to notice the progress of character, and note the tiny seeds of events to come.

Neither the intellectual nor the moral character of any person stands stock-still: a man improves, or he declines. Mrs. Gaunt had a great taste for reading; Mr. Gaunt had not: what was the consequence? At the end of seven years the lady's understanding had made great strides; the gentleman's had apparently retrograded.

Now we all need a little excitement, and we all seek it, and get it by hook or by crook. The girl who satisfies that natural craving with what the canting dunces of the day call a "sensational" novel, and the girl who does it by waltzing till daybreak, are sisters; only one obtains the result intellectually, and the other obtains it like a young animal, and a pain in her empty head next day.

Mrs. Gaunt could enjoy company, but was never dull with a good book. Mr. Gaunt was a pleasant companion, but dull out of company. So, rather than not have it, he would go to the parlor of the "Red Lion," and chat and sing with the yeomen and rollicking young squires that resorted thither; and this was matter of grief and astonishment to Mrs. Gaunt.

It was balanced by good qualities she knew how to appreciate. Morals were much looser then than now, and more than one wife of her acquaintance had a rival in the village, or even among her own domestics; but Griffith had no loose inclinations of that kind, and never gave

her a moment's uneasiness. He was constancy and fidelity in person.

Sobriety had not yet been invented. But Griffith was not so intemperate as most squires; he could always mount the stairs to tea, and generally without staggering.

He was uxorious, and it used to come out after his wine. This Mrs. Gaunt permitted at first, but by-and-by says she, expanding her delicate nostrils, "You may be as affectionate as you please, dear, and you may smell of wine if you will, but please not to smell of wine and be affectionate at the same moment. I value your affection too highly to let you disgust me with it."

And the model husband yielded to this severe restriction; and, as it never occurred to him to give up his wine, he forbore to be affectionate in his cups.

One great fear Mrs. Gaunt had entertained before marriage ceased to haunt her. Now and then her quick eye saw Griffith writhe at the great influence her director had with her; but he never spoke out to offend her, and she, like a good wife, saw, smiled, and adroitly, tenderly soothed; and this was nothing compared to what she had feared.

Griffith saw his wife admired by other men, yet never chid nor chafed. The merit of this belonged in a high degree to herself. The fact is, that Kate Peyton, even before marriage, was not a coquette at heart, though her conduct might easily bear that construction; and she was now an experienced matron, and knew how to be as charming as ever, yet check or parry all approaches to gallantry on the part of her admirers. Then Griffith observed how delicate and prudent his lovely wife was, without ostentatious prudery, and his heart was at peace.

He was the happier of the two, for he looked up to his wife as well as loved her, whereas she was troubled at times with a sense of superiority to her husband. She was amiable enough, and wise enough, to try and shut her eyes to it, and often succeeded, but not always.

Upon the whole, they were a contented couple, though the lady's dreamy eyes seemed still to be exploring earth and sky in search of something they had not yet found, even in wedded life.

They lived at Henshaw. A letter had been found among Mr. Charlton's papers explaining his will. He counted on their marrying, and begged them to live at the castle. He had left it on his wife's death; it reminded him too keenly of happier days; but, as he drew near his end, and must leave all earthly things, he remembered the old house with tenderness, and put out his dying hand to save it from falling into decay.

Unfortunately, considerable repairs were needed; and, as Kate's property was tied up so tight, Griffith's two thousand pounds went in repairing the house, lawn, park palings, and walled gardens; went, every penny, and left the bridge over the lake still in a battered, rotten, and, in a word, picturesque condition.

This lake was by the older inhabitants sometimes called the "mere," and sometimes "the fish-pools;" it resembled an hour-glass in shape, only curved like a crescent.

In mediæval times it had no doubt been a main defense of the place. It was very deep in parts, especially at the waist or narrow that was spanned by the decayed bridge. There were

hundreds of carp and tench in it older than any He in Cumberland, and also enormous pike and eels; and fish from one to five pounds' weight by the million. The water literally teemed from end to end; and this was a great comfort to so good a Catholic as Mrs. Gaunt. When she was seized with a desire to fast, and that was pretty often, the gardener just went down to the lake and flung a casting-net in some favorite hole, and drew out half a bushel the first cast; or planted a flue-net round a patch of weeds, then belabored the weeds with a long pole, and a score of fine fish were sure to run out into the meshes.

The "mere" was clear as plate glass, and came to the edge of the shaven lawn, and reflected flowers, turf, and overhanging shrubs deliciously.

Yet an ill name brooded over its seductive waters, for two persons had been drowned in it during the last hundred years, and the last one was the parson of the parish, returning from the squire's dinner in the normal condition of a guest, A.D. 1740-50. But what most affected the popular mind was, not the jovial soul hurried into eternity, but the material circumstance that the greedy pike had cleared the flesh off his bones in a single night, so that little more than a skeleton, with here and there a black rag hanging to it, had been recovered next morning.

This ghastly detail being stoutly maintained and constantly repeated by two ancient eye-witnesses, whose one melodramatic incident and treasure it was, the rustic mind saw no beauty whatever in those pellucid and delicious waters, where flowers did glass themselves.

As for the women of the village, they looked on this sheet of water as a trap for their poor bodies and those of their children, and spoke of it as a singular hardship in their lot that *Hernshaw Mere* had not been filled up threescore years ago.

The castle itself was no castle, nor had it been for centuries. It was just a house with battlements; but attached to the stable was an old square tower, that really had formed part of the mediæval castle.

However, that unsubstantial shadow, a name, is often more durable than the thing, especially in rural parts; but, indeed, what is there in a name for Time's teeth to catch hold of?

Though no castle, it was a delightful abode. The drawing-room and dining-room had both spacious bay windows, opening on to the lawn that sloped very gradually down to the pellucid lake, and there was mirrored. On this sweet lawn the inmates and guests walked for sun and mellow air, and often played bowls at eventide.

On the other side was the drive up to the house door, and a sweep, or small oval plot of turf, surrounded by gravel; and a gate at the corner of this sweep opened into a grove of the grandest old spruce-firs in the island.

This grove, dismal in winter and awful at night, was deliciously cool and sombre in the dog-days. The trees were spires; and their great stems stood serried like infantry in column, and flung a grand canopy of sombre plumes overhead. A strange, antique, and classic grove—*nulli pen- trabilis astro*.

This retreat was inclosed on three sides by a wall, and on the east side came nearly to the house. A few laurel bushes separated the two.

At night it was shunned religiously, on account of the ghosts. Even by daylight it was little frequented, except by one person—and she took to it amazingly. That person was Mrs. Gaunt. There seems to be, even in educated women, a singular, instinctive love of twilight; and here was twilight at high noon. The place, too, suited her dreamy, meditative nature. Hither, then, she often retired for peace and religious contemplation, and moved slowly in and out among the tall stems, or sat still, with her thoughtful brow leaned on her white hand, till the cool, umbrageous retreat got to be called, among the servants, "The Dame's Haunt."

This, I think, is all that needs be told about the mere place, where the Gaunts lived comfortably many years, and little dreamed of the strange events in store for them—little knew the passions that slumbered in their own bosoms, and, like other volcanoes, bided their time.

CHAPTER XV.

ONE day, at dinner, Father Francis let them know that he was ordered to another part of the county, and should no longer be able to enjoy their hospitality. "I am sorry for it," said Griffith, heartily; and Mrs. Gaunt echoed him out of politeness; but, when husband and wife came to talk it over in private, she let out all of a sudden, and for the first time, that the spiritual coldness of her governor had been a great misfortune to her all these years. "His mind," said she, "is set on earthly things. Instead of helping the angels to raise my thoughts to heaven and heavenly things, he drags me down to earth. Oh, that man's soul was born without wings."

Griffith ventured to suggest that Francis was, nevertheless, an honest man, and no mischief-maker.

Mrs. Gaunt soon disposed of this. "Oh, there are plenty of honest men in the world," said she; "but in one's spiritual director one needs something more than that, and I have pined for it like a thirsty soul in the desert all these years. Poor good man, I love him dearly; but, thank heaven, he is going."

The next time Francis came, Mrs. Gaunt took an opportunity to inquire, but in the most delicate way, who was to be his successor.

"Well," said he, "I fear you will have no one for the present—I mean no one very fit to direct you in practical matters; but in all that tends directly to the welfare of the soul, you will have one young in years, but old in good works, and very much my superior in piety."

"I think you do yourself injustice, father," said Mrs. Gaunt, sweetly. She was always polite; and, to be always polite, you must be sometimes insincere.

"No, my daughter," said Father Francis, quietly, "thank God, I know my own defects, and they teach me a little humility. I discharge my religious duties punctually, and find them wholesome and composing; but I lack that holy unction, that spiritual imagination, by which more favored Christians have fitted themselves to converse with angels. I have too much body, I suppose, and too little soul. I own to you that I can not look forward to the hour of death as a happy release from the burden of the flesh. Life

is pleasant to me; immortality tempts me not; the pure in heart delight me; but in the sentimental part of religion I feel myself dry and barren. I fear God, and desire to do His will; but I can not love Him as the saints have done; my spirit is too dull—too gross. I have often been unable to keep pace with you in your pious and lofty aspirations, and this softens my regret at quitting you, for you will be in better hands, my daughter."

Mrs. Gaunt was touched by her old friend's humility, and gave him both hands, with the tears in her eyes. But she said nothing; the subject was delicate; and, really, she could not honestly contradict him.

A day or two afterward he brought his successor to the house—a man so remarkable that Mrs. Gaunt almost started at first sight of him. Born of an Italian mother, his skin was dark, and his eyes coal-black; yet his ample but symmetrical forehead was singularly white and delicate. Very tall and spare, and both face and figure were of that exalted kind which make ordinary beauty seem dross. In short, he was one of those ethereal priests the Roman Catholic Church produces every now and then by way of incredible contrast to the thickset peasants in black that form her staple. This Brother Leonard looked and moved like a being who had come down from some higher sphere to pay the world a very little visit, and be very kind and patient with it all the time.

He was presented to Mrs. Gaunt, and bowed calmly, coldly, and with a certain mixture of humility and superiority, and gave her but one tranquil glance, then turned his eyes inward as before.

Mrs. Gaunt, on the contrary, was almost flattered at being presented so suddenly to one who seemed to her Religion embodied. She blushed, and looked timidly at him, and was anxious not to make an unfavorable impression.

She found it, however, very difficult to make any impression at all. Leonard had no small talk, and met her advances in that line with courteous monosyllables; and when she, upon this, turned and chatted with Father Francis, he did not wait for an opening to strike in, but sought a shelter from her commonplaces in his own thoughts.

Then Mrs. Gaunt yielded to her genuine impulse, and began to talk about the prospects of the Church, and what might be done to reconvert the British Isles to the true faith. Her cheek flushed, and her eye shone with the theme, and Francis smiled paternally; but the young priest drew back: Mrs. Gaunt saw in a moment that he disapproved of a woman meddling with so high a matter uninvited. If he had said so she had spirit enough to have resisted; but the cold, lofty look of polite but grave disapproval dashed her courage and reduced her to silence.

She soon recovered so far as to be piqued. She gave her whole attention to Francis, and, on parting with her guests, she courtesied coldly to Leonard, and said to Francis, "Ah! my dear friend, I foresee I shall miss you terribly."

I am afraid this pretty speech was intended as a side cut at Leonard.

"But on the impassive ice the lightnings play."

Her new confessor retired, and left her with a sense of inferiority, which would have been pleas-

ing to her woman's nature if Leonard himself had appeared less conscious of it, and had shown ever so little approval of herself; but, impressed upon her too sharply, it piqued and mortified her. However, like a gallant champion, she awaited another encounter. She so rarely failed to please, she could not accept defeat.

Father Francis departed.

Mrs. Gaunt soon found that she really missed him. She had got into a habit of running to her confessor twice a week, and to her director nearly every day that he did not come of his own accord to her.

Her good sense showed her at once she must not take up Brother Leonard's time in this way. She went a long while, for her, without confession: at last she sent a line to Leonard asking him when it would be convenient to him to confess her. Leonard wrote back to say that he received penitents in the chapel for two hours after matins every Monday, Tuesday, and Saturday.

This implied first come, first served, and was rather galling to Mrs. Gaunt.

However, she rode one morning, with her groom behind her, and had to wait until an old woman in a red cloak and black bonnet was first disposed of. She confessed a heap. And presently the soft but chill tones of Brother Leonard broke in with these freezing words: "My daughter, excuse me; but confession is one thing, gossip about ourselves is another."

This distinction was fine, but fatal. The next minute the fair penitent was in her carriage, her eyes filled with tears of mortification.

"The man is a spiritual machine," said she; and her pride was mortified to the core.

In these happy days she used to open her heart to her husband, and she went so far as to say some bitter little feminine things of her new confessor before him.

He took no notice at first; but at last he said one day, "Well, I am of your mind; he is very poor company, compared with that jovial old blade, Francis. But why so many words, Kate? You don't use to bite twice at a cherry: if the milksop is not to your taste, give him the sack and be hanged to him." And with this homely advice Squire Gaunt dismissed the matter, and went to the stable to give his mare a ball.

So, you see, Mrs. Gaunt was discontented with Francis for not being an enthusiast, and nettled with Leonard for being one.

The very next Sunday morning she went and heard Leonard preach. His first sermon was an era in her life. After twenty years of pulpit proser, there suddenly rose before her a sacred orator—an orator born—blessed with that divine and thrilling eloquence that no heart can really resist. He prepared his great theme with art at first; but, once warm, it carried him away, and his hearers went with him like so many straws on the flood. And in the exercise of this great gift the whole man seemed transfigured; abroad, he was a languid, rather slouching priest, who crept about, a picture of delicate humility, but with a shade of meanness; for, religious prejudice apart, it is ignoble to sweep the wall in passing as he did, and eye the ground; but, once in the pulpit, his figure rose and swelled majestically, and seemed to fly over them all like a guardian angel's: his sallow cheek burned, his great Italian eye shot black lightning at the im-

penitent, and melted ineffably when he soothed the sorrowful.

Observe that great, mean, brown bird in the Zoological Gardens, which sits so tame on its perch, and droops and slouches like a drowsy duck. That is the great and soaring eagle. Who would believe it, to look at him? Yet all he wants is to be put in his right place instead of his wrong. He is not himself in man's cages, belonging to God's sky. Even so Leonard was abroad in the world, but at home in the pulpit; and so he somewhat crept and slouched about the parish, but soared like an eagle in his native air.

Mrs. Gaunt sat thrilled, enraptured, melted. She hung upon his words; and when they ceased, she still sat motionless, spell-bound—loth to believe that accents so divine could really come to an end.

Even while all the rest were dispersing she sat quite still and closed her eyes. For her soul was too high-strung now to endure the chit-chat she knew would attack her on the road home—chit-chat that had been welcome enough coming home from other preachers.

And by this means she came hot and undiluted to her husband; she laid her white hand on his shoulder, and said, "Oh, Griffith, I have heard the voice of God."

Griffith looked alarmed, and rather shocked than elated.

Mrs. Gaunt observed that, and tacked on, "Speaking by the lips of his servant." But she fired again the next moment, and said, "The grave hath given us back St. Paul in the Church's need, and I have heard him this day."

"Good heavens! where?"

"At St. Mary's Chapel."

Then Griffith looked very incredulous. Then she gushed out with, "What, because it is a small chapel, you think a great saint can not be in it? Why, our Savior was born in a stable, if you go to that."

"Well, but, my dear, consider," said Griffith; "who ever heard of comparing a living man to St. Paul for preaching? Why, he was an apostle, for one thing, and there are no apostles nowadays. He made Felix tremble on his throne, and almost persuaded Whatsename, another heathen gentleman, to be a Christian."

"That is true," said the lady, thoughtfully; "but he sent one man that we know of to sleep. Catch Brother Leonard sending any man to sleep! And then nobody will ever say of him that he was long preaching."

"Why, I do say it," replied Griffith. "By the same token, I have been waiting dinner for you this half hour, along of his preaching."

"Ah! that's because you did not hear him," retorted Mrs. Gaunt: "if you had, it would have seemed too short, and you would have forgotten all about your dinner for once."

Griffith made no reply. He even looked vexed at her enthusiastic admiration. She saw, and said no more. But after dinner she retired to the grove, and thought of the sermon and the preacher—thought of them all the more that she was discouraged from enlarging on them. And it would have been kinder, and also wiser, of Griffith, if he had encouraged her to let out her heart to him on this subject, although it did not happen to interest him. A husband should not chill an enthusiastic wife, and, above all, should

never separate himself from her favorite topic, when she loves him well enough to try and share it with him.

Mrs. Gaunt, however, though her feelings were quick, was not cursed with a sickly or irritable sensibility; nor, on the other hand, was she one of those lovely little bores who can not keep their tongues off their favorite theme. She quietly let the subject drop for a whole week; but the next Sunday morning she asked her husband if he would do her a little favor.

"I'm more likely to say ay than nay," was the cheerful reply.

"It is just to go to chapel with me, and then you can judge for yourself."

Griffith looked rather sheepish at this proposal, and said he could not very well do that.

"Why not, dearest, just for once?"

"Well, you see, parties run so high in this parish, and every thing one does is noted. Why, if I was to go to chapel, they'd say directly, 'Look at Griffith Gaunt: he is so tied to his wife's apron he is going to give up the faith of his ancestors.'"

"The faith of your ancestors! That is a good jest. The faith of your grandfather at the outside: the faith of your ancestors was the faith of mine and me."

"Well, don't let us differ about a word," said Griffith; "you know what I mean. Did ever I ask you to go to church with me? and, if I were to ask you, would you go?"

Mrs. Gaunt colored, but would not give in. "That is not the same thing," said she. "I do profess religion; you do not. You scarce think of God on week days, and, indeed, never mention his name except in the way of swearing; and on Sunday you go to church—for what? to doze before dinner—you know you do. Come, now, with you 'tis no question of religion, but just of nap or no nap; for Brother Leonard won't let you sleep, I warn you fairly."

Griffith shook his head. "You are too hard on me, wife. I know I am not so good as you are, and never shall be; but that is not the fault of the Protestant faith, which hath reared so many holy men; and some of 'em our ancestors burnt alive, and will burn in hell themselves for the deed. But, look you, sweetheart, if I'm not a saint I'm a gentleman, and, say I wear my faith loose, I won't drag it in the dirt none the more for that. So you must excuse me."

Mrs. Gaunt was staggered; and, if Griffith had said no more, I think she would have withdrawn her request, and so the matter ended. But persons unversed in argument can seldom let well alone, and this simple squire must needs go on to say, "Besides, Kate, it would come to the parson's ears, and he is a friend of mine, you know. Why, I shall be sure to meet him to-morrow."

"Ay," retorted the lady, "by the cover-side. Well, when you do, tell him you refused your wife your company for fear of offending the religious views of a fox-hunting parson."

"Nay, Kate," said Griffith, "this is not to ask thy man to go with thee: 'tis to say go he must, willy nilly." With that he rose and rang the bell. "Order the chariot," said he; "I am to go with our dame."

Mrs. Gaunt's face beamed with gratified pride and affection.

The chariot came round, and Griffith handed his dame in. He then gave an involuntary sigh, and followed her with a hang-dog look.

She heard the sigh, and saw the look, and laid her hand quickly on his shoulder, and said, gently but coldly, "Stay you at home, my dear. We shall meet at dinner."

"As you will," said he, cheerfully; and they went their several ways. He congratulated himself on her clemency and his own escape. She went along, sorrowful at having to drink so great a bliss alone, and thought it unkind and stupid of Griffith not to yield with a good grace if he could yield at all; and, indeed, women seem cleverer than men in this, that, when they resign their wills, they do it graciously and not by halves. Perhaps they are more accustomed to knock under; and you know practice makes perfect.

But every smaller feeling was swept away by the preacher, and Mrs. Gaunt came home full of pious and lofty thoughts.

She found her husband seated at the dinner-table, with one turnip before him, and even that was not comestible, for it was his grandfather's watch, with a face about the size of a new-born child's. "Forty-five minutes past one, Kate," said he, ruefully.

"Well, why not bid them serve the dinner?" said she, with an air of consummate indifference.

"What! dine alone o' Sunday? Why, you know I couldn't eat a morsel without you, set opposite."

Mrs. Gaunt smiled affectionately. "Well, then, my dear, we had better order dinner an hour later next Sunday."

"But that will upset the servants, and spoil their Sunday."

"And am I to be their slave?" said Mrs. Gaunt, getting a little warm. "Dinner! dinner! What! shall I starve my soul by hurrying away from the oracles of God to a sirlon? Oh, these gross appetites, how they deaden the immortal half, and wall out heaven's music! For my part, I wish there was no such thing as eating and drinking; 'tis like falling from heaven down into the mud, to come back from such divine discourse and be greeted with 'dinner! dinner! dinner! dinner!'"

The next Sunday, after waiting half an hour for her, Griffith began his dinner without her.

And this time, on her arrival, instead of remonstrating with her, he excused himself. "Nothing," said he, "upsets a man's temper like waiting for his dinner."

"Well, but you have not waited."

"Yes I did, a good half hour—till I could wait no longer."

"Well, dear, if I were you I would not have waited at all, or else waited till your wife came home."

"Ah! dame, that is all very well for you to say. You could live on hearing of sermons and smelling to rosebuds. You don't know what 'tis to be a hungry man."

The next Sunday he sat sadly down, and finished his dinner without her; and she came home and sat down to half-empty dishes, and ate much less than she used when she had him to keep her company in it.

Griffith, looking on disconsolate, told her she

was more like a bird pecking than a Christian eating of a Sunday.

"No matter, child," said she, "so long as my soul is filled with the bread of Heaven."

Leonard's eloquence suffered no diminution either in quantity or quality, and, after a while, Gaunt gave up his rule of never dining abroad on the Sunday. If his wife was not punctual, his stomach was, and he had not the same temptation to dine at home he used to have.

And, indeed, by degrees, instead of quietly enjoying his wife's company on that sweet day, he got to see less of her than on the week days.

CHAPTER XVI.

YOUR mechanical preacher flings his words out happy-go-lucky, but the pulpit orator, like every other orator, feels his people's pulse as he speaks, and vibrates with them, and they with him.

So Leonard soon discovered he had a great listener in Mrs. Gaunt: she was always there whenever he preached, and her rapt attention never flagged. Her gray eyes never left his face, and, being upturned, the full orbs came out in all their grandeur, and seemed an angel's come down from heaven to hear him; for, indeed, to a very dark man, as Leonard was, the gentle radiance of a true Saxon beauty seems always more or less angelic.

By degrees this face became a help to the orator. In preaching he looked sometimes to it for sympathy, and, lo! it was sure to be melting with sympathy. Was he led on to higher or deeper thoughts than most of his congregation could understand, he looked to this face to understand him, and, lo! it had quite understood him, and was beaming with intelligence.

From a help and an encouragement it became a comfort and a delight to him.

On leaving the pulpit and cooling, he remembered its owner was no angel, but a woman of the world, and had put to him frivolous questions.

The illusion, however, was so beautiful that Leonard, being an imaginative man, was unwilling to dispel it by coming into familiar contact with Mrs. Gaunt. So he used to make his assistant visit her, and receive her when she came to confess, which was very rarely; for she was discouraged by her first reception.

Brother Leonard lived in a sort of dwarf monastery, consisting of two cottages, an oratory, and a sepulchre. The two latter were old, but the cottages had been built expressly for him and another seminary priest who had been invited from France. Inside, these cottages were little more than cells; only the bigger had a kitchen, which was a glorious place compared with the parlor; for it was illuminated with bright pewter plates, copper vessels, brass candlesticks, and a nice clean woman, with a plain gown kilted over a quilted silk petticoat—Betty Scarf, an old servant of Mrs. Gaunt's, who had married, and was now the widow Gough.

She stood at the gate one day as Mrs. Gaunt drove by, and courtesied, all beaming.

Mrs. Gaunt stopped the carriage, and made some kind and patronizing inquiries about her; and it ended in Betty asking her to come in and

see her place. Mrs. Gaunt looked a little shy at that, and did not move. "Nay, they are both abroad till supper-time," said Betty, reading her in a moment by the light of sex. Then Mrs. Gaunt smiled and got out of her carriage. Betty took her in and showed her every thing in doors and out. Mrs. Gaunt looked mighty demure and dignified, but scanned every thing closely, only without seeming too curious.

The cold gloom of the parlor struck her. She shuddered and said, "This would give me the vapors. But, doubtless, angels come and brighten it for *him*."

"Not always," said Betty. "I do see him with his head in his hand by the hour, and hear him sigh ever so loud as I pass the door. Why, one day he was fain to have me and my spinning-wheel aside him. Says he, 'Let me hear thy busy wheel, and see thee ply it.' 'And welcome,' says I. So I sat in his room, and span, and he sat a gloating of me as if he had never seen a woman spin hemp afore (he is a very simple man); and presently says he—but what signifies what *he* said?"

"Nay, Betty, if you please. I am much interested in him. He preaches so divinely."

"Ay," said Betty, "that's his gift. But a poor trencher-man; and I declare I'm ashamed to eat all the vittels that are eaten here, and me but a woman."

"But what did he say to you that time?" asked Mrs. Gaunt, a little impatiently.

Betty cudgeled her memory. "Well, says he, 'My daughter' (the poor soul always calls me his daughter, and me old enough to be his mother mostly), says he, 'how comes it that you are never wearied nor cast down, and yet you but serve a sinner like yourself; but I do often droop in my Master's service, and He is the lord of heaven and earth?' Says I, 'I'll tell ye, sir—because ye don't eat enough o' vittels.'"

"What an answer!"

"Why, 'tis the truth, dame. And says I, 'If I was to be always fasting, like as you be, d'ye think I should have the heart to work from morn till night?' Now, wasn't I right?"

"I don't know till I hear what answer he made," said Mrs. Gaunt, with mean caution.

"Oh, he shook his head, and said he ate mortal food enow (poor simple body!), but drank too little of grace divine. That was his word."

Mrs. Gaunt was a good deal struck and affected by this revelation, and astonished at the slighting tone Betty took in speaking of so remarkable a man. The saying that "No man is a hero to his valet" was not yet current, or perhaps she would have been less surprised at that.

"Alas! poor man," said she, "and is it so? To hear him, I thought his soul was borne up night and day by angels' pinions—"

The widow interrupted her. "Ay, you hear him preach, and it is like God's trumpet mostly, and so much I say for him in all companies. But I see him directly after; he totters into this very room, and sits him down pale and panting, and one time like to swoon, and another all for crying, and then he is ever so dull and sad for the whole afternoon."

"And nobody knows this but you? You have got my old petticoat still, I see. I must look you up another."

"You are very good, dame, I am sure. 'Twill

not come amiss; I've only this for Sundays and all. No, my lady, not a soul but me and you; I'm not one as tells tales out of doors; but I don't mind you, dame; you are my old mistress, and a discreet woman. 'Twill go no farther than your ear."

Mrs. Gaunt told her she might rely on that. The widow then inquired after Mrs. Gaunt's little girl, and admired her dress, and described her own ailments, and poured out a continuous stream of topics bearing no affinity to each other except that they were all of them not worth mentioning; and all the while she thus discoursed, Mrs. Gaunt's thoughtful eyes looked straight over the chatterbox's white cap, and explored vacancy; and by-and-by she broke the current of twaddle with the air of a camelopard marching across a running gutter.

"Betsy Gough," said she, "I am thinking."

Mrs. Gough was struck dumb by an announcement so singular.

"I have heard, and I have read, that great, and pious, and learned men are often to seek in little simple things, such as plain bodies have at their fingers' ends. So now, if you and I could only teach him something for all he has taught us. And, to be sure, we ought to be kind to him if we can; for oh! Betty, my woman, 'tis a poor vanity to go and despise the great, and the learned, and the sainted, because, forsooth, we find them out in some one little weakness, we that are all made up of weaknesses and defects. So, now, I sit me down in this very chair—so. And sit you there. Now let us, you and me, look at his room quietly all over, and see what is wanting."

"First and foremost, methinks this window should be filled with geraniums and jessamine, and so forth. With all his learning, perhaps he has to be taught, the color of flowers and golden green leaves, with the sun shining through, how it soothes the eye and relieves the spirits! yet every woman born knows that. Then do but see this bare table! a purple cloth on that, I say."

"Which he will fling it out of the window, I say."

"Nay, for I'll embroider a cross in the middle with gold braid. Then a rose-colored blind would not be amiss; and there must be a good mirror facing the window; but, indeed, if I had my way, I'd paint these horrid walls the first thing."

"How you run on, dame! Bless your heart, you'd turn his den into a palace: he won't suffer that; he's all for self-mortification, poor simple soul."

"Oh, not all at once, I did not mean," said Mrs. Gaunt; "but by little and little, you know. We must begin with the flowers: God made them; and so, to be sure, he will not spurn *them*."

Betty began to enter into the plot. "Ay, ay," said she; "the flowers first, and so creep on. But naught will avail to make a man of him so long as he eats but of eggs and garden-stuff, like the beasts of the field, that to-day are, and to-morrow are cast into the oven."

Mrs. Gaunt smiled at this ambitious attempt of the widow to apply Scripture. Then she said, rather timidly, "Could you make his eggs into omelets, and so pound in a little meat with your small herbs? I dare say he would be none the wiser, and he so bent on high and heavenly things."

"You may take your oath of that."

"Well, then. And I shall send you some stock from the castle, and you can cook his vegetables in good strong gravy, unbeknownst."

The widow Gough chuckled aloud.

"But stay," said Mrs. Gaunt; "for us to play the woman so, and delude a saint for his mere bodily weal—will it not be a sin, and a sacrilege to boot?"

"Let that flea stick in the wall," said Betty, contemptuously. "Find you the meat, and I'll find the deceit; for he is as poor as a rat into the bargain. Nay, nay, God Almighty will never have the heart to burn us two for such a trifle. Why, 'tis no more than cheating a froward child taking 's physic."

Mrs. Gaunt got into her carriage and went home, thinking all the way. What she had heard filled her with feelings strangely but sweetly composed of veneration and pity. In that Leonard was a great orator and a high-minded priest, she revered him; in that he was solitary and sad, she pitied him; in that he wanted common sense, she felt like a mother, and must take him under her wing. All true women love to protect; perhaps it is a part of the great maternal element; but to protect a man, and yet look up to him, this is delicious.

Leonard, in truth, was one of those high-strung men who pay for their periods of religious rapture by hours of melancholy. This oscillation of the spirits in extraordinary men appears to be more or less a law of nature, and this the widow Gough was not aware of.

The very next Sunday, while he was preaching, she and Mrs. Gaunt's gardener were filling his bow window with flower-pots, the flowers in full bloom and leaf. The said window was large, and had a broad sill outside, and, inside, one of the old-fashioned high window-seats that follow the shape of the window. Mrs. Gaunt, who did nothing by halves, sent up a cartload of flower-pots, and Betty and the gardener arranged at least eighty of them, small and great, inside and outside the window.

When Leonard returned from preaching, Betty was at the door to watch. He came past the window with his hands on his breast, and his eyes on the ground, and never saw the flowers in his own window. Betty was disgusted. However, she followed him stealthily as he went to his room, and she heard a profound "Ah!" burst from him.

She bustled in and found him standing in a rapture, with the blood mantling in his pale cheeks, and his dark eyes glowing.

"Now blessed be the heart that hath conceived this thing, and the hand that hath done it," said he. "My poor room is a bower of roses, all beauty and fragrance." And he sat down, inhaling them and looking at them; and a dreamy, tender complacency crept over his heart, and softened his noble features exquisitely.

Widow Gough, red with gratified pride, stood watching him and admiring him; but, indeed, she often admired him, though she had got into a way of decrying him.

But at last she lost patience at his want of curiosity, that being a defect she was free from herself. "Ye don't ask me who sent them," said she, reproachfully.

"Nay, nay," said he, "prithee do not tell me; let me divine."

"Divine, then," said Betty, roughly. "Which I suppose you means 'guess.'"

"Nay, but let me be quiet a while," said he, imploringly; "let me sit down and fancy that I am a holy man, and some angel hath turned my cave into a Paradise."

"No more an angel than I am," said the practical widow. "But, now I think on't, y'are not to know who 'twas. Them as sent them they bade me hold my tongue."

This was not true; but Betty, being herself given to unwise revelations and superfluous secrecy, chose suddenly to assume that this business was to be clandestine.

The priest turned his eye inward and meditated. "I see who it is," said he, with an air of absolute conviction. "It must be the lady who comes always when I preach, and her face like none other; it beams with divine intelligence. I will make her all the return we poor priests can make to our benefactors. I will pray for her soul here among the flowers God has made, and she has given his servant to glorify his dwelling. My daughter, you may retire."

This last with surprising, gentle dignity: so Betty went off rather abashed, and avenged herself by adulterating the holy man's innutritious food with Mrs. Gaunt's good gravy, while he prayed fervently for her eternal weal among the flowers she had given him.

Now Mrs. Gaunt, after eight years of married life, was too sensible and dignified a woman to make a romantic mystery out of nothing. She concealed the gravy, because there secrecy was necessary, but she never dreamed of hiding that she had sent her spiritual adviser a load of flowers. She did not tell her neighbors, for she was not ostentatious, but she told her husband, who grunted, but did not object.

But Betty's nonsense lent an air of romance and mystery that was well adapted to captivate the imagination of a young, ardent, and solitary spirit like Leonard.

He would have called on the lady he suspected, and thanked her for her kindness. But this he feared would be unwelcome, since she chose to be his unknown benefactress. It would be ill taste in him to tell her he had found her out: it might offend her sensibility, and then she would draw in.

He kept his gratitude, therefore, to himself, and did not cool it by utterance. He often sat among the flowers in a sweet reverie, enjoying their color and fragrance; and sometimes he would shut his eyes, and call up the angelical face with great celestial up-turned orbs, and fancy it among her own flowers, and the queen of them all.

These day-dreams did not at that time interfere with his religious duties. They only took the place of those occasional hours, when, partly by the reaction consequent on great religious fervor, partly through exhaustion of the body weakened by fasts, partly by the natural delicacy of his fibre and the tenderness of his disposition, his soul used to be sad.

By-and-by these languid hours, sad no longer, became sweet and dear to him. He had something so interesting to think of, to dream about. He had a Madonna that cared for him in secret.

She was human, but good, beautiful, and wise. She came to his sermons, and understood every word.

"And she knows me better than I know myself," said he: "since I had these flowers from her hand I am another man."

One day he came into his room and found two watering-pots there. One was large, and had a rose to it; the other small, and with a plain spout.

"Ah!" said he; and colored with delight. He called Betty, and asked her who had brought them.

"How should I know?" said she, roughly. "I dare say they dropped from heaven. See, there is a cross painted on 'em in gold letters."

"And so there is!" said Leonard, and crossed himself.

"That means nobody is to use them but you, I trow," said Betty, rather crossly.

The priest's cheek colored high. "I will use them this instant," said he. "I will revive my drooping children, as they have revived me." And he caught up a watering-pot with ardor.

"What, with the sun hot upon 'em?" screamed Betty. "Well, saving your presence, you *are* a simple man."

"Why, good Betty, 'tis the sun that makes them faint," objected the priest, timidly, and with the utmost humility of manner, though Betty's tone would have irritated a smaller mind.

"Well, well," said she, softening; "but ye see it never rains with a hot sun, and the flowers they know that, and look to be watered after Nature, or else they take it amiss. You, and all your sort, sir, you think to be stronger than Nature; you do fast and pray all day, and won't look a woman in the face like other men; and now you wants to water the very flowers at noon."

"Betty," said Leonard, smiling, "I yield to thy superior wisdom, and I will water them at morn and eve. In truth we have all much to learn: let us try and teach one another as kindly as we can."

"I wish you'd teach me to be as humble as you be," blurted out Betty, with something very like a sob; "and more respectful to my betters," added she, angrily.

Watering the flowers she had given him became a solace and a delight to the solitary priest: he always watered them with his own hands, and felt quite paternal over them.

One evening Mrs. Gaunt rode by with Griffith and saw him watering them. His tall figure, graceful, though inclined to stoop, bent over them with feminine delicacy, and the simple act, which would have been nothing in vulgar hands, seemed to Mrs. Gaunt so earnest, tender, and delicate in him, that her eyes filled, and she murmured, "Poor Brother Leonard."

"Why, what's wrong with him now?" asked Griffith, a little peevishly.

"That was him watering his flowers."

"Oh, is that all?" said Griffith, carelessly.

Leonard said to himself, "I go too little abroad among my people." He made a little round, and it ended in Hernshaw Castle.

Mrs. Gaunt was out.

He looked disappointed; so the servant suggested that perhaps she was in the Dame's haunt: he pointed to the grove.

Leonard followed his direction, and soon found himself, for the first time, in that sombre, solemn retreat.

It was a hot summer day, and the grove was delicious. It was also a place well suited to the imaginative and religious mind of the Italian.

He walked slowly to and fro, in religious meditation. Indeed, he had nearly thought out his next sermon, when his meditative eye happened to fall on a terrestrial object that startled and thrilled him. Yet it was only a lady's glove. It lay at the foot of a rude wooden seat beneath a gigantic pine.

He stooped and picked it up. He opened the little fingers, and called up in fancy the white and tapering hand that glove could fit. He laid the glove softly on his own palm, and eyed it with dreamy tenderness. "So this is the hand that hath solaced my loneliness," said he: "a hand fair as that angelic face, and sweet as the kind heart that doeth good by stealth."

Then, forgetting for a moment, as lofty spirits will, the difference between meum and tuum, he put the little glove in his bosom, and paced thoughtfully home through the woods, that were separated from the grove only by one meadow; and so he missed the owner of the glove, for she had returned home while he was meditating in her favorite haunt.

Leonard, among his other accomplishments, could draw and paint with no mean skill. In one of those hours that used to be of melancholy, but now were hours of dreamy complacency, he took out his pencils and endeavored to sketch the inspired face that he had learned to preach to, and now to dwell on with gratitude.

Clearly as he saw it before him, he could not reproduce it to his own satisfaction.

After many failures, he got very near the mark; yet still something was wanting.

Then, as a last resource, he actually took his sketch to church with him, and in preaching made certain pauses, and, with a very few touches, perfected the likeness; then, on his return home, threw himself on his knees and prayed forgiveness of God with many sighs and tears, and hid the sacrilegious drawing out of his own sight.

Two days after he was at work coloring it, and the hours flew by like minutes as he laid the mellow, melting tints on with infinite care and delicacy. Labor ipse voluptas.

Mrs. Gaunt heard Leonard had called on her in person. She was pleased at that, and it encouraged her to carry out her whole design.

Accordingly, one afternoon, when she knew Leonard would be at vespers, she sent on a loaded pony-cart, and followed it on horseback.

Then it was all hurry-scurry with Betty and her to get their dark deeds done before their victim's return.

These good creatures set the mirror opposite the flowery window, and so made the room a very bower. They fixed a magnificent crucifix of ivory and gold over the mantel-piece, and they took away his hassock of rushes and substituted a prie-dieu of rich crimson velvet. All that remained was to put their blue cover, with its golden cross, on the table. To do this, however, they had to remove the priest's papers and things: they were covered with a baize cloth. Mrs. Gaunt felt them under it.

"But perhaps he will be angry if we move his papers," said she.

"Not he," said Betty. "He has no secrets from God or man."

"Well, I won't take it on me," said Mrs. Gaunt, merrily. "I leave that to you." And she turned her back and settled the mirror officiously, leaving all the other responsibilities to Betty.

The sturdy widow laughed at her scruples, and whipped off the cloth without ceremony. But soon her laugh stopped mighty short, and she uttered an exclamation.

"What is the matter?" said Mrs. Gaunt, turning her head sharply round.

"A wench's glove, as I'm, a living sinner," groaned Betty.

A poor little glove lay on the table, and both women eyed it like basilisks a moment. Then Betty pounced on it and examined it with the fierce keenness of her sex in such conjunctures, searching for a name or a clew.

Owing to this rapidity, Mrs. Gaunt, who stood at some distance, had not time to observe the button on the glove, or she would have recognized her own property.

"He have had a hussy with him unbeknown," said Betty, "and she have left her glove. 'Tis easy to get in by the window and out again. Only let me catch her. I'll tear her eyes out, and give him my mind. I'll have no young husbands creeping in an' out where I be."

Thus spoke the simple woman, venting her coarse domestic jealousy.

The gentlewoman said nothing, but a strange feeling traversed her heart for the first time in her life.

It was a little chill, it was a little ache, it was a little sense of sickness; none of these violent, yet all distinct. And all about what? After this curious, novel spasm at the heart, she began to be ashamed of herself for having had such a feeling.

Betty held her out the glove; and then she recognized it, and turned as red as fire.

"You know whose 'tis?" said Betty, keenly.

Mrs. Gaunt was on her guard in a moment. "Why, Betty," said she, "for shame! 'tis some penitent hath left her glove after confession. Would you belie a good man for that? Oh fie!"

"Humph!" said Betty, doubtfully. "Then why keep it under cover? Now you can read, dame; let us see if there isn't a letter or so writ by the hand as owns this very glove."

Mrs. Gaunt declined, with cold dignity, to pry into Brother Leonard's manuscripts.

Her eye, however, darted sidelong at them, and told another tale; and, if she had been there alone, perhaps the daughter of Eve would have predominated.

Betty, inflamed by the glove, rummaged the papers in search of female handwriting. She could tell that from a man's, though she could not read either.

But there is a handwriting that the most ignorant can read at sight, and so Betty's researches were not in vain: hidden under several sheets of paper she found a picture. She gave but one glance at it, and screamed out, "There, didn't I tell you? Here she is! the brazen, red-haired—
LAWK A DAISY! WHY, 'TIS YOURSELF."

CHAPTER XVII.

"ME!" cried Mrs. Gaunt, in amazement: then she ran to the picture, and at sight of it every other sentiment gave way for a moment to gratified vanity. "Nay," said she, beaming and blushing, "I was never half so beautiful. What heavenly eyes!"

"The fellows to 'em be in your own head, dame; this moment."

"Seeing is believing," said Mrs. Gaunt, gayly, and in a moment she was at the priest's mirror, and inspected her eyes minutely, cocking her head this way and that. She ended by shaking it, and saying "Nay; he has flattered them prodigiously."

"Not a jot," said Betty. "If you could see yourself in chapel, you do turn 'em up just so, and the white shows all round." Then she tapped the picture with her finger: "Oh them eyes! they were never made for the good of his soul, poor simple man."

Betty said this with sudden gravity; and now Mrs. Gaunt began to feel very awkward. "Mr. Gaunt would give fifty pounds for this," said she, to gain time; and, while she uttered that sentence, she whipped on her armor.

"I'll tell you what I think," said she, calmly: "he wished to paint a Madonna; and he must take some woman's face to aid his fancy. All the painters are driven to that. So he just took the best that came to hand, and that is not saying much, for this is a rare ill-favored parish; and he has made an angel of her—a very angel. There, hide Me away again, or I shall long for Me—to show to my husband. I must be going; I wouldn't be caught here now for a pension."

"Well, if ye must," said Betty; "but when will ye come again?" (She hadn't got the petticoat yet.)

"Humph!" said Mrs. Gaunt, "I have done all I can for him, and perhaps more than I ought. But there's nothing to hinder you from coming to me. I'll be as good as my word; and I have an old Paduasoy besides; you can do something with it, perhaps."

"You are very good, dame," said Betty, courtesying.

Mrs. Gaunt then hurried away, and Betty looked after her very expressively, and shook her head. She had a female instinct that mischief was brewing.

Mrs. Gaunt went home in a reverie.

At the gate she found her husband, and asked him to take a turn in the garden with her.

He complied; and she intended to tell him a portion, at least, of what had occurred. She began timidly, after this fashion—"My dear, Brother Leonard is so grateful for your flowers," and then hesitated.

"I'm sure he is very welcome," said Griffith. "Why doesn't he sup with us and be sociable, as Father Francis used? Invite him; let him know he will be welcome."

Mrs. Gaunt blushed, and objected, "He never calls on us."

"Well, well, every man to his taste," said Griffith, indifferently, and proceeded to talk to her about his farm, and a sorrel mare with a white mane and tail that he had seen, and thought it would suit her.

She humored him, and affected a great interest in all this, and had not the courage to force the other topic on.

Next Sunday morning, after a very silent breakfast, she burst out, almost violently, "Griffith, I shall go to the parish church with you, and then we will dine together afterward."

"You don't mean it, Kate?" said he, delighted.

"Ay, but I do. Although you refused to go to chapel with me."

They went to church together, and Mrs. Gaunt's appearance there created no small sensation. She was conscious of that, but hid it, and conducted herself admirably. Her mind seemed entirely given to the service, and to a dull sermon that followed.

But at dinner she broke out, "Well, give me your church for a sleeping draught. You all slumbered, more or less: those that survived the drowsy, droning prayers, sank under the dry, dull, dreary discourse. You snored, for one."

"Nay, I hope not, my dear."

"You did, then, as loud as your bass fiddle."

"And you sat there and let me!" said Griffith, reproachfully.

"To be sure I did. I was too good a wife, and too good a Christian, to wake you. Sleep is good for the body, and twaddle is not good for the soul. I'd have slept too, if I could; but, with me going to chapel, I'm not used to sleep at that time o' day. You can't sleep, and Brother Leonard speaking."

In the afternoon came Mrs. Gough, all in her best. Mrs. Gaunt had her into her bedroom, and gave her the promised petticoat, and the old Paduasoy gown; and then, as ladies will, when their hand is once in, added first one thing, and then another, till there was quite a large bundle.

"But how is it you are here so soon?" asked Mrs. Gaunt.

"Oh, we had next to no sermon to-day. He couldn't make no hand of it; dawdled on a bit; then gave us his blessing, and bundled us out."

"Then I've lost nothing," said Mrs. Gaunt.

"Not you. Well, I don't know. Mayhap if you had been there he'd have preached his best. But, la! we weren't worth it."

At this conjecture Mrs. Gaunt's face burned; but she said nothing; only she cut the interview short, and dismissed Betty with her bundle.

As Betty crossed the landing, Mrs. Gaunt's new lady's-maid, Caroline Ryder, stepped accidentally, on purpose, out of an adjoining room, in which she had been lurking, and lifted her black brows in affected surprise. "What, are you going to strip the house, my woman?" said she, quietly.

Betty put down the bundle, and set her arms akimbo. "There is none on't stolen, any way," said she.

Caroline's black eyes flashed fire at this, and her cheek lost color; but she parried the innuendo skillfully.

"Taking my perquisites on the sly, that is not so very far from stealing."

"Oh, there's plenty left for you, my fine lady. Besides, you don't want *her*; you can set your cap at the master, they say. I'm too old for that, and too honest into the bargain."

"Too ill-favored, you mean, ye old harridan," said Ryder, contemptuously.

But, for reasons hereafter to be dealt with, Betty's thrust went home, and the pair were mortal enemies from that hour.

Mrs. Gaunt came down from her room decomposed; from that she became restless and irritable; so much so, indeed, that, at last, Mr. Gaunt told her, good-humoredly enough, if going to church made her ill (meaning peevish), she had better go to chapel. "You are right," said she, "and so I will."

The next Sunday she was at her post in good time.

The preacher cast an anxious glance around to see if she was there. Her quick eye saw that glance, and it gave her a demure pleasure.

This day he was more eloquent than ever, and he delivered a beautiful passage concerning those who do good in secret. In uttering these eloquent sentences, his cheek glowed, and he could not deny himself the pleasure of looking down at the lovely face that was turned up to him. Probably his look was more expressive than he intended: the celestial eyes sank under it, and were abashed, and the fair cheek burned; and then so did Leonard's at that.

Thus subtly yet effectually did these two minds communicate in a crowd, that never noticed nor suspected the delicate interchange of sentiment that was going on under their very eyes.

In a general way compliments did not seduce Mrs. Gaunt: she was well used to them, for one thing. But to be praised in that sacred edifice, and from the pulpit, and by such an orator as Leonard, and to be praised in words so sacred and beautiful that the ears around her drank them with delight, all this made her heart beat, and filled her with soft and sweet complacency.

And then to be thanked in public, yet, as it were, clandestinely, this gratified the furtive tendency of women.

There was no irritability this afternoon, but a gentle radiance that diffused itself on all around, and made the whole household happy, especially Griffith, whose pipe she filled, for once, with her own white hand, and talked dogs, horses, calves, hinds, cows, politics, markets, hay, to please him, and seemed interested in them all.

But the next day she changed—ill at ease, and out of spirits, and could settle to nothing.

It was very hot, for one thing; and, altogether, a sort of lassitude and distaste for every thing overpowered her, and she retired into the grove, and sat languidly on a seat with half-closed eyes.

But her meditations were no longer so calm and speculative as heretofore. She found her mind constantly recurring to one person, and, above all, to the discovery she had made of her portrait in his possession. She had turned it off to Betty Gough; but here, in her calm solitude and umbrageous twilight, her mind crept out of its cave, like wild and timid things at dusk, and whispered to her heart that Leonard perhaps admired her more than was safe or prudent.

Then this alarmed her, yet caused her a secret complacency; and that, her furtive satisfaction, alarmed her still more.

Now, while she sat thus absorbed, she heard a gentle footstep coming near. She looked up, and there was Leonard close to her, standing meekly with his arms crossed upon his bosom.

His being there so pat upon her thoughts

scared her out of her habitual self-command. She started up with a faint cry, and stood panting, as if about to fly, with her beautiful eyes turned large upon him.

He put forth a deprecating hand, and soothed her. "Forgive me, madam," said he, "I have un-awares intruded on your privacy; I will retire."

"Nay," said she, falteringly, "you are welcome. But no one comes here; so I was startled;" then, recovering herself, "Excuse my ill manners. 'Tis so strange you should come to me here, of all places."

"Nay, my daughter," said the priest, "not so very strange: contemplative minds love such places. Calling one day to see you, I found this sweet and solemn grove, the like I never saw in England; and to-day I returned in hopes to profit by it. Do but look around at these tall columns; how calm, how reverend! 'Tis God's own temple, not built with hands."

"Indeed it is," said Mrs. Gaunt, earnestly. Then, like a woman as she was, "So you came to see my trees, not me."

Leonard blushed. "I did not design to return without paying my respects to her who owns this temple, and is worthy of it; nay, I beg you not to think me ungrateful."

His humility, and gentle but earnest voice, made Mrs. Gaunt ashamed of her petulance. She smiled sweetly, and looked pleased. However, ere long, she attacked him again. "Father Francis used to visit us often," said she. "He made friends with my husband, too. And I never lacked an adviser while he was here."

Leonard looked so confused at this second reproach that Mrs. Gaunt regretted having uttered it. Then he said humbly that Francis was a secular priest, whereas he was convent-bred. He added that by his years and experience Francis was better fitted to advise persons of her age and sex in matters secular than he was. He concluded timidly that he was ready, nevertheless, to try and advise her, but could not, in such matters, assume the authority that belongs to age and knowledge of the world.

"Nay, nay," said she, earnestly, "guide and direct my soul, and I am content."

He said, yes; that was his duty and his right.

Then, after a little hesitation, which at once let her know what was coming, he began to thank her, with infinite grace and sweetness, for her kindness to him.

She looked him full in the face, and said she was not aware of any kindness she had shown him worth speaking of.

"That but shows," said he, "how natural it is to you to do acts of goodness. My poor room is a very bower now, and I am happy in it. I used to feel very sad there at times, but your hand has cured me."

Mrs. Gaunt colored beautifully. "You make me ashamed," said she. "Things are come to a pass indeed if a lady may not send a few flowers and things to her spiritual father without being—thanked for it. And oh! sir, what are earthly flowers compared with those blossoms of the soul you have shed so liberally over us? Our immortal parts were all asleep when you came here, and waked them by the fire of your words. Eloquence! 'twas a thing I had read of, but never heard, nor thought to hear. Methought the orators and poets of the Church were all in their

graves this thousand years, and she must go all the way to heaven that would hear the soul's true music. But I know better now."

Leonard colored high with pleasure. "Such praise from you is too sweet," he muttered. "I must not court it. The heart is full of vanity." And he deprecated farther eulogy by a movement of the hand extremely refined, and, in fact, rather feminine.

Deferring to his wish, Mrs. Gaunt glided to other matters, and was naturally led to speak of the prospects of their Church, and the possibility of reconverting these islands. This had been the dream of her young heart; but marriage and maternity, and the universal coldness with which the subject had been received, had chilled her so, that of late years she had almost ceased to speak of it. Even Leonard, on a former occasion, had listened coldly to her; but now his heart was open to her. He was, in fact, quite as enthusiastic on this point as ever she had been; and then he had digested his aspirations into clearer forms. Not only had he resolved that Great Britain must be converted, but had planned the way to do it. His cheek glowed, his eyes gleamed, and he poured out his hopes and his plans before her with an eloquence that few mortals could have resisted.

As for this, his hearer, she was quite carried away by it. She joined herself to his plans on the spot; she begged, with tears in her eyes, to be permitted to support him in this great cause. She devoted to it her substance, her influence, and every gift that God had given her: the hours passed like minutes in this high converse; and, when the tinkling of the little bell at a distance summoned him to vespers, he left her with a gentle regret he scarcely tried to conceal, and she went slowly in like one in a dream, and the world seemed dead to her forever.

Nevertheless, when Mrs. Ryder, combing out her long hair, gave one inadvertent tug, the fair enthusiast came back to earth, and asked her, rather sharply, who her head was running on.

Ryder, a very handsome young woman, with fine black eyes, made no reply, but only drew her breath audibly hard.

I do not very much wonder at that, nor at my having to answer that question for Mrs. Ryder, for her head was at that moment running, like any other woman's, on the man she was in love with.

And the man she was in love with was the husband of the lady whose hair she was combing, and who put her that curious question—plump.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THIS Caroline Ryder was a character almost impossible to present so as to enable the reader to recognize her should she cross his path, so great was the contradiction between what she was and what she seemed, and so perfect was the imitation.

She looked a respectable young spinster, with a grace of manner beyond her station, and a decency and propriety of demeanor that inspired respect.

She was a married woman, separated from her

husband by mutual consent; and she had had many lovers, each of whom she had loved ardently—for a little while. She was a woman that brought to bear upon foolish, culpable loves a mental power that would have adorned the wool-sack.

The moment prudence or waning inclination

an invaluable servant, she got one directly, and was off to fresh pastures.

A female rake, but with the air of a very prude.

Still the decency and propriety of her demeanour were not all hypocrisy, but half hypocrisy, and half inborn and instinctive good taste and good sense.



"One inadvertent tug, and the fair enthusiast came back to earth."

[Page 57.]

made it advisable to break with the reigning favorite, she set to work to cool him down by deliberate coldness, sullenness, insolence, and generally succeeded. But if he was incurable, she never hesitated as to her course; she smiled again on him and looked out for another place: being

As dangerous a creature to herself and others as ever tied on a bonnet.

On her arrival at Hershaw Castle she cast her eyes round to see what there was to fall in love with, and observed the gamekeeper, Tom Leicester. She gave him a smile or two that won

his heart, but there she stopped; for soon the ruddy cheek, brown eyes, manly proportions, and square shoulders of her master attracted this connoisseur in masculine beauty. And then his manner was so genial and hearty, with a smile for every body. Mrs. Ryder eyed him demurely day by day, and often opened a window slyly to watch him unseen.

From that she got to throwing herself in his way, and this with such art that he never discovered it, though he fell in with her about the house six times as often as he met his wife or any other inmate.

She had already studied his character, and, whether she arranged to meet him full or to cross him, it was always with a courtesy and a sunshiny smile. He smiled on her in his turn, and felt a certain pleasure at sight of her, for he loved to see people bright and cheerful about him.

Then she did, of her own accord, what no other master on earth would have persuaded her to do—looked over his linen; sewed on buttons for him; and sometimes the artful jade deliberately cut a button off a clean shirt, and then came to him and sewed it on during wear. This brought about a contact none knew better than she how to manage to a man's undoing. The eyelashes lowered over her work, deprecating, yet inviting—the twenty stitches, when six would have done—the one coy glance at leaving. All this soft witchcraft beset Griffith Gaunt, and told on him, but not as yet in the way his innamorata intended. "Kate," said he one day, "that girl of yours is worth her weight in gold."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Gaunt, frigidly; "I have not discovered it."

When Caroline found that her master was single-hearted, and loved his wife too well to look elsewhere, instead of hating him, she began to love him more seriously, and to hate his wife, that haughty beauty who took such a husband as a matter of course, and held him tight without troubling her head.

It was a coarse age, and in that very county more than one wife had suffered jealous agony from her own domestic. But here the parts were inverted: the lady was at her ease; the servant paid a bitter penalty for her folly. She was now passionately in love, and had to do menial offices for her rival every hour of the day: she must sit with Mrs. Gaunt, and make her dresses, and consult with her how to set off her hateful beauty to the best advantage. She had to dress her, and look daggers at her satin skin and royal neck, and to sit behind her an hour at a time combing and brushing her long golden hair.

How she longed to tear a handful of it out, and then run away! Instead of that, her happy rival expected her to be as tender and coaxing with it as Madame de Maintenon was with the Queen's of France.

Ryder called it "yellow stuff" down in the kitchen; that was one comfort, but a feeble one; the sun came in at the lady's window, and Ryder's shapely hand was overflowed, and her eyes offended, by waves of burnished gold; and one day Griffith came in and kissed it in her very hand. His lips felt nothing but his wife's glorious hair; but, by that exquisite sensibility which the heart can convey in a moment to the very finger-nails, Caroline's hand, beneath, felt the soft touch through her mistress's hair, and the enamored

hypocrite thrilled, and then sickened at her own folly.

For in her good sense could be overpowered, but never long blinded.

On the day in question she was thinking of Griffith, as usual, and wondering whether he would always prefer yellow hair to black. This actually put her off her guard for once, and she gave the rival hair a little contemptuous tug; and the reader knows what followed.

Staggered by her mistress's question, Caroline made no reply, but only panted a little, and proceeded more carefully.

But oh, the struggle it cost her not to slap both Mrs. Gaunt's fair cheeks with the backs of the brushes! And what with this struggle, and the reprimand, and the past agitations, by-and-by the comb ceased, and the silence was broken by faint sobs.

Mrs. Gaunt turned calmly round and looked full at her hysterical handmaid.

"What is to do?" said she. "Is it because I hid you, child? Nay, you need not take that to heart; it is just my way: I can bear any thing but my hair pulled." With this she rose and poured some drops of sal-volatile into water, and put it to her secret rival's lips: it was kindly done, but with that sort of half-contemptuous and thoroughly cold pity women are apt to show to women, and especially when one of them is Mistress and the other is Servant.

Still it cooled the extreme hatred Caroline had nursed, and gave her a little twinge, and awakened her intelligence. Now her intelligence was truly remarkable when not blinded by passion. She was a woman with one or two other masculine traits beside her roving heart. For instance, she could sit and think hard and practically for hours together; and on these occasions her thoughts were never dreamy and vague; it was no brown study, but good hard thinking. She would knit her coal-black brows, like Lord Thurlow himself, and realize the situation, and weigh the pros and cons with a steady judicial power rarely found in her sex; and, nota bene, when once her mind had gone through this process, then she would act with almost monstrous resolution.

She now shut herself up in her own room for some hours and weighed the matter carefully.

The conclusion she arrived at was this—that if she staid at Henshaw Castle there would be mischief; and probably she herself would be the principal sufferer to the end of the chapter, as she was now.

She said to herself, "I shall go mad, or else expose myself, and be turned away with loss of character; and then what will become of me and my child? Better lose life or reason than character. I know what I have to go through; I have left a man ere now with my heart tugging at me to stay beside him. It is a terrible wrench; and then all seems dead for a long while without him. But the world goes on and takes you round with it, and by-and-by you find there are as good fish left in the sea as ever came out on't. I'll go, while I've sense enough left to see I must."

The very next day she came to Mrs. Gaunt and said she wished to leave. "Certainly," said Mrs. Gaunt, coldly. "May I ask the reason?"

"Oh, I have no complaint to make, ma'am,

none whatever; but I am not happy here; and I wish to go when my month's up, or sooner, ma'am, if you could suit yourself."

Mrs. Gaunt considered a moment; then she said, "You came all the way from Gloucestershire to me: had you not better give the place a fair trial? I have had two or three good servants that felt uncomfortable at first, but they soon found out my ways, and staid with me till they married. As for leaving me before your month, that is out of the question." To this Ryder said not a word, but merely vented a little sigh, half dogged, half submissive, and went cat-like about, arranging her mistress's things with admirable precision and neatness. Mrs. Gaunt watched her without seeming to do so, and observed that her discontent did not in the least affect her punctual discharge of her duties. Said Mrs. Gaunt to herself, "This servant is a treasure; she shall not go." And Ryder to herself, "Well, 'tis but for a month, and then no power shall keep me here."

CHAPTER XIX.

Not long after these events came the county ball. Griffith was there, but no Mrs. Gaunt. This excited surprise, and, among the gentlemen, disappointment. They asked Griffith if she was unwell; he thanked them dryly, she was very well, and that was all they could get out of him. But to the ladies he let out that she had given up balls, and, indeed, all reasonable pleasures. "She does nothing but fast, and pray, and visit the sick." He added, with rather a weak smile, "I see next to nothing of her." A minx stood by and put in her word. "You should catch the small-pox; then who knows? she might look in upon you."

Griffith laughed, but not heartily. In truth, Mrs. Gaunt's religious fervor knew no bounds. Absorbed in pious schemes and religious duties, she had little time, and much distaste, for frivolous society; invited none but the devout, and found polite excuses for not dining abroad. She sent her husband into the world alone, and laden with apologies. "My wife is turned saint. 'Tis a sin to dance, a sin to hunt, a sin to enjoy ourselves. We are here to fast and pray, and build schools, and go to church twice a day."

And so he went about publishing his household ill; but, to tell the truth, a secret satisfaction peeped through his lugubrious accents. An ugly saint is an unmixed calamity to jolly fellows; but to be lord and master, and possessor of a beautiful saint, was not without its piquant charm. His jealousy was dormant, not extinct; and Kate's piety tickled that foible, not wounded it. He found himself the rival of heaven, and the successful rival; for, let her be ever so strict, ever so devout, she must give her husband many comforts she could not give to heaven.

This soft and piquant phase of the passion did not last long. All things are progressive.

Brother Leonard was director now as well as confessor; his visits became frequent, and Mrs. Gaunt often quoted his authority for her acts or her sentiments. So Griffith began to suspect that the change in his wife was entirely due to Leonard; and that, with all her eloquence and fervor, she was but a priest's echo. This galled

him. To be sure, Leonard was only an ecclesiastic; but, if he had been a woman, Griffith was the man to wince. His wife to lean so on another; his wife to withdraw from the social pleasures she had hitherto shared with him; and all because another human creature disapproved them. He writhed in silence a while, and then remonstrated. He was met at first with ridicule: "Are you going to be jealous of my confessor?" and, on repeating the offense, with a kind but grave admonition, that silenced him for the time, but did not cure him, nor even convince him.

The facts were too strong. Kate was no longer to him the genial companion she had been; gone was the ready sympathy with which she had listened to all his little earthly concerns; and as for his hay-making, he might as well talk about it to an iceberg as to the partner of his bosom.

He was genial by nature, and could not live without sympathy. He sought it in the parlor of the "Red Lion."

Mrs. Gaunt's high-bred nostrils told her where he haunted, and it caused her dismay. Woman-like, instead of opening her battery at once, she wore a gloomy and displeased air, which a few months ago would have served her turn and brought about an explanation at once; but Griffith took it for a stronger dose of religious sentiment, and trundled off to the "Red Lion" all the more.

So then at last she spoke her mind, and asked him how he could lower himself so, and afflict her.

"Oh!" said he, doggedly, "this house is too cold for me now. My mate is priest-ridden. Plague on the knave that hath put coldness 'twixt thee and me."

Mrs. Gaunt froze visibly, and said no more at that time.

One bit of sunshine remained in the house, and shone brighter than ever on its chilled master—shone through two black, seducing eyes.

Some three months before the date we have now reached, Caroline Ryder's two boxes were packed and corded ready to go next day. She had quietly persisted in her resolution to leave, and Mrs. Gaunt, though secretly angry, had been just and magnanimous enough to give her a good character.

Now female domestics are like the little birds; if that great hawk, their mistress, follows them about, it is a deadly grievance; but if she does not, they follow her about, and pester her with idle questions, and invite the beak and claws of petty tyranny and needless interference.

So, the afternoon before she was to leave, Caroline Ryder came to her mistress's room on some imaginary business. She was not there. Ryder, forgetting that it did not matter a straw, proceeded to hunt her every where, and at last ran out with only her cap on to "the Dame's Haunt," and there she was, but not alone: she was walking up and down with Brother Leonard. Their backs were turned, and Ryder came up behind them. Leonard was pacing gravely, with his head gently drooping as usual. Mrs. Gaunt was walking elastically, and discoursing with great fire and animation.

Ryder glided after, noiseless as a serpent, more bent on wondering and watching now than on overtaking; for inside the house her mistress showed none of this charming vivacity.

Presently the keen black eyes observed a

"trifle light as air" that made them shine again.

She turned and wound herself among the trees, and disappeared. Soon after she was in her own room, a changed woman. With glowing cheeks, sparkling eyes, and nimble fingers, she uncorded her boxes, unpacked her things, and placed them neatly in the drawers.

What more had she seen than I have indicated?

Only this: Mrs. Gaunt, in the warmth of discourse, laid her hand lightly for a moment on the priest's elbow: that was nothing, she had laid the same hand on Ryder; for, in fact, it was a little womanly way she had, and a hand that settled like down. But this time, as she withdrew it again, that delicate hand seemed to speak; it did not leave Leonard's elbow all at once; it glided slowly away, first the palm, then the fingers, and so parted lingeringly.

The other woman saw this subtle touch of womanhood, coupled it with Mrs. Gaunt's vivacity and the air of happiness that seemed to inspire her whole eloquent person, and formed a harsh judgment on the spot, though she could not see the lady's face.

When Mrs. Gaunt came in she met her, and addressed her thus: "If you please, ma'am, have you any one coming in my place?"

Mrs. Gaunt looked her full in the face. "You know I have not," said she, haughtily.

"Then, if it is agreeable to you, ma'am, I will stay. To be sure the place is dull, but I have got a good mistress—and—"

"That will do, Ryder; a servant has always her own reasons, and never tells *them* to her mistress. You can stay this time, but the next you go, and once for all. I am not to be trifled with."

Ryder called up a look all submission, and retired with an obeisance. But, once out of sight, she threw off the mask and expanded with insolent triumph. "Yes, I have my own reasons," said she. "Keep you the priest, and I'll take the man."

From that hour Caroline Ryder watched her mistress like a lynx, and hovered about her master, and poisoned him slowly with vague insidious hints.

CHAPTER XX.

BROTHER LEONARD, like many holy men, was vain. Not but what he had his gusts of humility and diffidence, only they blew over.

At first, as you may perhaps remember, he doubted his ability to replace Father Francis as Mrs. Gaunt's director; but after a slight disclaimer he did replace him, and had no more misgivings as to his fitness. But his tolerance and good sense were by no means equal to his devotion and his persuasive powers, and so his advice in matters spiritual and secular somehow sowed the first seeds of conjugal coolness in Hernshaw Castle.

And now Ryder slyly insinuated into Griffith's ear that the mistress told the priest every thing, and did nothing but by his advice. Thus the fire already kindled was fanned by an artful woman's breath.

Griffith began to hate Brother Leonard, and to show it so plainly and rudely that Leonard

shrank from the encounter, and came less often, and staid but a few minutes. Then Mrs. Gaunt remonstrated gently with Griffith, but received short, sullen replies. Then, as the servile element of her sex was comparatively small in her, she turned bitter and cold, and avenged Leonard indirectly, but openly, with those terrible pins and needles a beloved woman has ever at command.

Then Griffith became moody, and downright unhappy, and went more and more to the "Red Lion," seeking comfort there now as well as company.

Mrs. Gaunt saw, and had fits of irritation, and fits of pity, and sore perplexity. She knew she had a good husband, and, instead of taking him to heaven with her, she found that each step she made with Leonard's help toward the angelic life seemed somehow to be bad for Griffith's soul and for his earthly happiness.

She blamed herself; she blamed Griffith; she blamed the Protestant heresy; she blamed every body and every thing—except Brother Leonard.

One Sunday afternoon Griffith sat on his own lawn, silently smoking his pipe. Mrs. Gaunt came to him, and saw an air of dejection on his genial face. Her heart yearned. She sat down beside him on the bench, and sighed; then he sighed too.

"My dear," said she, sweetly, "fetch out your *viol da gambo*, and we will sing a hymn or two together here this fine afternoon. We can praise God together, though we must pray apart; alas that it is so."

"With all my heart," said Griffith. "Nay, I forgot; my *viol da gambo* is not here. 'Tis at the 'Red Lion.'"

"At the 'Red Lion!'" said she, bitterly. "What, do you sing there as well as drink? Oh, husband, how can you so bemean yourself?"

"What is a poor man to do whose wife is priest-ridden, and got to be no company—except for angels?"

"I did not come here to quarrel," said she, coldly and sadly. Then they were both silent a minute. Then she got up and left him.

Brother Leonard, like many earnest men, was rather intolerant. He urged on Mrs. Gaunt that she had too many Protestants in her household; her cook and her nursemaid ought, at all events, to be Catholics. Mrs. Gaunt, on this, was quite ready to turn them both off, and that without disguise. But Leonard dissuaded her from so violent a measure. She had better take occasion to part with one of them, and by-and-by with the other.

The nursemaid was the first to go, and her place was filled by a Roman Catholic. Then the cook received warning. But this did not pass off so quietly: Jane Bannister was a buxom, hearty woman, well liked by her fellow-servants; her parents lived in the village, and she had been six years with the Gaunts, and her honest heart clung to them. She took to crying; used to burst out in the middle of her work, or while conversing with fitful cheerfulness on ordinary topics.

One day Griffith found her crying, and Ryder consoling her as carelessly and contemptuously as possible.

"Hey-day, lasses," said he, "what is your trouble?"

At this Jane's tears flowed in a stream, and Ryder made no reply, but waited.

At last, and not till the third or fourth time of asking, Jane blurted out that she had got the sack. Such was her homely expression, dignified, however, by honest tears.

"What for?" asked Griffith, kindly.

"Nay, sir," sobbed Jane, "that is what I want to know. Our dame ne'er found a fault in me; and now she does pack me off like a dog—me, that have been here this six years, and got to feel at home. What will father say? He'll give me a hiding. For two pins I'd drown myself in the mere."

"Come, you must not blame the mistress," said the sly Ryder. "She is a good mistress as ever breathed; 'tis all the priest's doings. I'll tell you the truth, master, if you will pass me your word I sha'n't be sent away for it."

"I pledge you my word as a gentleman," said Griffith.

"Well, then, sir, Jane's fault is yours and mine. She is not a Papist, and that is why she is to go. How I come to know, I listened in the next room, and heard the priest tell our dame she must send away two of us, and have Catholics. The priest's word it is law in this house; 'twas in March he gave the order; Harriet, she went in May, and now poor Jane is to go—for walking to church behind you, sir. But there, Jane, I believe he would get our very master out of the house if he could, and then what would become of us all?"

Griffith turned black, and then ashy pale, under this venomous tongue, and went away without a word, looking dangerous.

Ryder looked after him, and her black eye glittered with a kind of fiendish beauty.

Jane, having told her mind, now began to pluck up a little spirit. "Mrs. Ryder," said she, "I never thought to like you so well;" and, with that, gave her a great, hearty, smacking kiss, which Ryder, to judge by her countenance, relished, as epicures albumen. "I won't cry no more. After all, this house is no place for us that be women; 'tis a fine roost, to be sure! where the hen she crows, and the cock do but cluck."

Town-bred Ryder laughed at the rustic maid's simile, and, not to be outdone in metaphor, told her there were dogs that barked and dogs that bit. "Our master is one of those that bite. I've done the priest's business. He is as like to get the sack as you are."

Griffith found his wife seated on the lawn reading. He gulped down his ire as well as he could, but, nevertheless, his voice trembled a little with suppressed passion.

"So Jane is turned off now," said he.

"I don't know about being turned off," replied Mrs. Gaunt, calmly, "but she leaves me next month, and Cicely Davis comes back."

"And Cicely Davis is a useless slut that can not boil a potato fit to eat; but then she is a Papist, and poor Jenny is a Protestant, and can cook a dinner."

"My dear," said Mrs. Gaunt, "do not you trouble about the servants; leave them to me."

"And welcome; but this is not your doing, it is that Leonard's; and I can not allow a Popish priest to turn off all my servants that are worth

their salt. Come, Kate, you used to be a sensible woman and a tender wife; now I ask you, is a young bachelor a fit person to govern a man's family?"

Mrs. Gaunt laughed in his face. "A young bachelor!" said she; "whoever heard of such a term applied to a priest—and a saint upon earth?"

"Why, he is not married, so he must be a bachelor; and I say again it is monstrous for a young bachelor to come between old married folk, and hear all their secrets, and have a finger in every pie, and set up to be master of my house, and order my wife to turn away my servants for going to church behind me. Why not turn me away too? Their fault is mine."

"Griffith, you are in a passion, and I begin to think you want to put me in one."

"Well, perhaps I am. Job's patience went at last, and mine has been sore tried this many a month. 'Twas bad enough when the man was only your confessor: you told him every thing, and you don't tell me every thing. He knew your very heart better than I do, and that was a bitter thing for me to bear, that love you and have no secrets from you. But every man who marries a Catholic must endure this; so I put a good face on it, though my heart was often sore; 'twas the price I had to pay for my pearl of woman-kind. But since he set up your governor as well, you are a changed woman; you shun company abroad, you freeze my friends at home. You have made the house so cold that I am fain to seek the 'Red Lion' for a smile or a kindly word; and now, to please this fanatical priest, you would turn away the best servants I have, and put useless, dirty slatterns in their place, that happen to be Papists. You did not use to be so uncharitable nor so unreasonable. 'Tis the priest's doing. He is my secret, underhand enemy; I feel him undermining me, inch by inch, and I can bear it no longer. I must make a stand somewhere, and I may as well make it here; for Jenny is a good girl, and her folk live in the village, and she helps them. Think better of it, Kate, and let the poor wench stay, though she does go to church behind your husband."

"Griffith," said Mrs. Gaunt, "I might retort, and say that you are a changed man; for, to be sure, you did never use to interfere between me and my maids. Are you sure some mischief-making woman is not advising you? But there, do not let us chafe one another, for you know we are hot-tempered, both of us. Well, leave it for the present, my dear; prithee let me think it over till to-morrow, at all events, and try if I can satisfy you."

The jealous husband saw through this proposal directly. He turned purple. "That is to say, you must ask your priest first for leave to show your husband one grain of respect and affection, and not make him quite a cipher in his own house. No, Kate, no man who respects himself will let another man come between himself and the wife of his bosom. This business is between you and me; I will brook no interference in it; and I tell you plainly, if you turn this poor lass off to please this d—d priest, I'll turn the priest off to please her and her folk. They are as good as he is, any way."

The bitter contempt with which he spoke of

Brother Leonard, and this astounding threat, imported a new and dangerous element into the discussion: it stung Mrs. Gaunt beyond bearing. She turned with flashing eyes upon Griffith.

"As good as he is? The scum of my kitchen! You will make me hate the mischief-making hussy. She shall pack out of the house to-morrow morning."

"Then I say that priest shall never darken my doors again."

"Then I say they are my doors, not yours; and that holy man shall brighten them whenever he will."

If to strike an adversary dumb is the tongue's triumph, Mrs. Gaunt was victorious; for Griffith gasped, but did not reply.

They faced each other, pale with fury, but no more words.

No; an ominous silence succeeded this lamentable answer, like the silence that follows a thunder-clap.

Griffith stood still a while, benumbed, as it were, by the cruel stroke; then cast one speaking look of anguish and reproach upon her, drew himself haughtily up, and stalked away like a wounded lion.

Well said the ancients that anger is a short madness. When we reflect in cold blood on the things we have said in hot, how impossible they seem! how out of character with our real selves! And this is one of the recognized symptoms of mania.

There were few persons could compare with Mrs. Gaunt in native magnanimity, yet how ungenerous a stab had she given.

And had he gone on, she would have gone on; but when he turned silent at her bitter thrust, and stalked away from her, she came to herself almost directly.

She thought, "Good God! what have I said to him?"

And the flush of shame came to her cheek, and her eyes filled with tears.

He saw them not; he had gone away, wounded to the heart.

You see it was true. The house was hers, tied up as tight as wax. The very money (his own money) that had been spent on the place had become hers by being expended on real property; he could not reclaim it; he was her lodger—a dependent on her bounty.

During all the years they had lived together she had never once assumed the proprietor. On the contrary, she put him forward as the squire, and slipped quietly into the background. *Bene latuit.* But, lo! let a hand be put out to offend her saintly favorite, and that moment she could waken her husband from his dream, and put him down into his true legal position with a word. The matrimonial throne for him till he resisted her priest, and then a stool at her feet and his.

He was enraged as well as hurt; but, being a true lover, his fury was leveled, not at the woman who had hurt him, but at the man who stood out of sight and set her on.

By this time the reader knows his good qualities and his defects; superior to his wife in one or two things, he was by no means so thorough a gentleman as she was a lady. He had begun to make a party with his own servants against the

common enemy, and, in his wrath, he now took another step, or rather a stride, in the same direction. As he hurried away to the public house, white with ire, he met his gamekeeper coming in with a bucketful of fish fresh caught. "What have ye got there?" said Griffith, roughly; not that he was angry with the man, but that his very skin was full of wrath, and it must exude. Mr. Leicester did not relish the tone, and replied, bluntly and sulkily, "Pike for our Papists." The answer, though rude, did not altogether displease Griffith; it smacked of odium theologicum, a sentiment he was learning to understand. "Put 'em down, and listen to me, Thomas Leicester," said he. And his manner was now so impressive that Leicester put down the bucket with ludicrous expedition, and gaped at him.

"Now, my man, why do I keep you here?"

"To take care of your game, squire, I do suppose."

"What! when you are the worst gamekeeper in the county? How many poachers do you catch in the year? They have only to set one of their gang to treat you at the public house on a moonshiny night, and the rest can have all my pheasants at roost while you are boozing and singing."

"Like my betters in the parlor," muttered Tom.

"But that is not all," continued Gaunt, pretending not to hear him. "You wire my rabbits, and sell them in the town. Don't go to deny it, for I've half a dozen to prove it." Mr. Leicester looked very uncomfortable. His master continued—"I have known it this ten months, yet you are none the worse for't. Now, why do I keep you here, that any other gentleman in my place would send to Carlisle jail on a justice's warrant?"

Mr. Leicester, who had thought his master blind, and was so suddenly undeceived, hung his head and sniveled out, "'Tis because you have a good heart, squire, and would not ruin a poor fellow for an odd rabbit or two."

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried Gaunt. "Speak your mind for once, or else begone for a liar as well as a knave."

Thus appealed to, Leicester's gipsy eyes roved to and fro as if he were looking for some loophole to escape by; but at last he faced the situation. He said, with a touch of genuine feeling, "D—n the rabbits! I wish my hand had withered ere I touched one on them." But after this preface he sunk his voice to a whisper, and said, "I see what you are driving at, squire; and, since there is nobody with us (he took off his cap)—why, sir, 'tis this here mole I am in debt to, no doubt."

Then the gentleman and his servant looked one another silently in the face, and what with their standing in the same attitude and being both excited and earnest, the truth must be owned, a certain family likeness came out. Certainly their eyes were quite unlike. Leicester had his gipsy mother's—black, keen, and restless. Gaunt had his mother's—brown, calm, and steady. But the two men had the same stature, the same manly mould and square shoulders; and, though Leicester's cheek was brown as a berry, his forehead was singularly white for a man in his rank of life, and over his left temple, close to the roots of the hair, was an oblong

mole as black as ink, that bore a close resemblance in appearance and position to his master's.

"Tom Leicester, I have been insulted."

"That won't pass, sir. Who is the man?"

"One that I can not call out like a gentleman, and yet I must not lay on him with my cane, or I am like to get the sack as well as my servants. 'Tis the Popish priest, lad; Brother Leonard, own brother to Old Nick; he has got our dame's ear—she can not say him 'nay.' She is turning away all my people, and filling the house with Papists, to please him. And when I interfered, she as good as told me I should go next; and so I shall, I or else that priest."

This little piece of exaggeration fired Tom Leicester. "Say ye so, squire? then just you whisper a word in my ear, and George and I will lay that priest by the heels, and drag him through the horse-pond. He won't come here to trouble you after that, I know."

Gaunt's eyes flashed triumph. "A friend in need is a friend indeed," said he. "Ay, you are right, lad. There must be no broken bones, and no bloodshed; the horse-pond is the very thing; and if she discharges you for it, take no heed of her. You shall never leave Hershaw Castle for that good deed, or, if you do, I'll go with you; for the world it is wide, and I'll never live a servant in the house where I have been a master."

They then put their heads together and concerted the means by which the priest at his very next visit was to be decoyed into the neighborhood of the horse-pond.

And then they parted, and Griffith went to the "Red Lion." And a pair of black eyes, that had slyly watched this singular interview from an upper window, withdrew quietly; and soon after, Tom Leicester found himself face to face with their owner, the sight of whom always made his heart beat a little faster.

Caroline Ryder had been rather cold to him of late; it was therefore a charming surprise when she met him, all wreathed in smiles, and, drawing him apart, began to treat him like a bosom friend, and tell him what had passed between the master, and her and Jane. Confidence begets confidence; and so Tom told her in turn that the squire and the dame had come to words over it. "However," said he, "'tis all the priest's fault; but bide a while, all of ye."

With this mysterious hint he meant to close his revelations. But Ryder intended nothing of the kind. Her keen eye had read the looks and gestures of Gaunt and Leicester, and these had shown her that something very strange and serious was going on. She had come out expressly to learn what it was, and Tom was no match for her arts. She so smiled on him, and agreed with him, and led him, and drew him, and pumped him, that she got it all out of him on a promise of secrecy. She then entered into it with spirit, and being what they called a scholar, undertook to write a paper for Tom and his helper to pin on the priest's back. No sooner said than done. She left him, and speedily returned with the following document written out in large and somewhat straggling letters:

"HONEST FOLK, BEHOLD A
MISCHIEVOUS PRIEST, WHICH

FOR CAUSING OF STRIFE
'TWINX MAN AND WYFE
HATH MADE ACQUAINTAUNCE
WITH SQUIRE'S HORSE-POND."

And so a female conspirator was added to the plot.

Mrs. Gaunt co-operated too, but, need I say, unconsciously.

She was unhappy, and full of regret at what she had said. She took herself severely to task, and drew a very unfavorable comparison between herself and Brother Leonard. "How ill," she thought, "am I fitted to carry out that meek saint's views. See what my ungoverned temper has done." So, then, having made so great a mistake, she thought the best thing she could do was to seek advice of Leonard at once. She was not without hopes he would tell her to postpone the projected change in her household, and so soothe her offended husband directly.

She wrote a line requesting Leonard to call on her as soon as possible, and advise her in a great difficulty; and she gave this note to Ryder, and told her to send the groom off with it at once.

Ryder squeezed the letter, and peered into it, and gathered its nature before she gave it to the groom to take to Leonard.

When he was gone she went and told Tom Leicester, and he chuckled, and made his preparations accordingly.

Then she retired to her own room, and went through a certain process I have indicated before as one of her habits—knitted her great black brows, and pondered the whole situation with a mental power that was worthy of a nobler sphere and higher materials.

Her practical reverie, so to speak, continued until she was rung for to dress her mistress for dinner.

Griffith was so upset, so agitated and restless, he could not stay long in any one place, not even in the "Red Lion." So he came home to dinner, though he had mighty little appetite for it; and this led to another little conjugal scene.

Mrs. Gaunt mounted the great oak staircase to dress for dinner, languidly, as ladies are apt to do when reflection and regret come after excitement.

Presently she heard a quick foot behind her: she knew it directly for her husband's, and her heart yearned. She did not stop, nor turn her head: womanly pride withheld her from direct submission; but womanly tenderness and tact opened a way to reconciliation. She drew softly aside, almost to the wall, and went slower; and her hand, her sidelong drooping head, and her whole eloquent person, whispered plainly enough, "If somebody would like to make friends, here is the door open."

Griffith saw, but was too deeply wounded: he passed her without stopping (the staircase was eight feet broad).

But as he passed he looked at her and sighed, for he saw she was sorry.

She heard, and sighed too. Poor things, they had lived so happy together for years.

He went on.

Her pride bent: "Griffith!" said she, very timidly. He turned and stopped at that.

"Sweetheart," she murmured, "I was to blame. I was ungenerous. I forgot myself. Let me recall my words. You know they did not come from my heart."

"You need not tell me that," said Griffith, doggedly. "I have no quarrel with you, and never will. You but do what you are bidden, and say what you are bidden. I take the wound from you as best I may: the man that set you on, 'tis him I'll be revenged on."

"Alas! that you will think so," said she. "Believe me, dearest, that holy man would be the first to rebuke me for rebelling against my husband and flouting him. Oh, how *could* I say such things? I thank you, and love you dearly for being so blind to my faults; but I must not abuse your blindness. Father Leonard will put me to penance for the fault you forgive. *He* will hear no excuses. Prithee, now, be more just to that good man."

Griffith listened quietly, with a cold sneer upon his lip; and this was his reply: "Till that mischief-making villain came between you and me, you never gave me a bitter word: we were the happiest pair in Cumberland. But now what are we? And what shall we be in another year or two?—REVENGE!!"

He had begun gravely enough, but suddenly burst into an ungovernable rage; and as he yelled out that furious word, his face was convulsed and ugly to look at—very ugly.

Mrs. Gaunt started: she had not seen that vile expression in his face for many a year; but she knew it again.

"Ay!" he cried, "he has made me drink a bitter cup this many a day. But I'll force as bitter a one down his throat, and you shall see it done."

Mrs. Gaunt turned pale at this violent threat; but, being a high-spirited woman, she stiffened and hid her apprehensions loftily. "Madman that you are," said she, "I throw away excuses on *Jealousy*, and I waste reason upon phrenzy. I'll say no more things to provoke you; but, to be sure, 'tis I that am offended now, and deeply too, as you will find."

"So be it," said Griffith, sullenly; then, grinding his teeth, "he shall pay for that too."

Then he went to his dressing-room, and she to her bedroom—Griffith hating Leonard, and Kate deeply indignant with Griffith.

And, ere her blood could cool, she was subjected to the keen, cold scrutiny of another female, and that female a secret rival.

CHAPTER XXI.

WOULD you learn what men gain by admitting a member of the fair sex into their conspiracies? read the tragedy of *Venice Preserved*; and, by way of afterpiece, this little chapter.

Mrs. Gaunt sat pale and very silent, and Caroline Ryder stood behind, doing up her hair into a magnificent structure that added eight inches to the lady's height, and in this operation her own black hair and keen black eyes came close to the golden hair and deep blue eyes, now troubled, and made a picture striking by contrast.

As she was putting the finishing touches, she said quietly, "If you please, dame, I have something to tell you."

Mrs. Gaunt sighed wearily, expecting some very minute communication.

"Well, dame, I dare say I am risking my place, but I can't help it."

"Another time, Ryder," said Mrs. Gaunt. "I am in no humor to be worried with my servants' squabbles."

"Nay, madam, 'tis not that at all—'tis about Father Leonard. Sure you would not like him to be drawn through the horse-pond, and that is what they mean to do next time he comes here."

In saying these words, the jade contrived to be adjusting Mrs. Gaunt's dress. The lady's heart gave a leap, and the servant's cunning finger felt it, and then felt a shudder run all over that stately frame. But after that Mrs. Gaunt seemed to turn to steel. She distrusted Ryder, she could not tell why; distrusted her, and was upon her guard.

"You must be mistaken," said she. "Who would dare to lay hands on a priest in my house?"

"Well, dame, you see they egg one another on. Don't ask me to betray my fellow-servants, but let us balk them. I don't deceive you, dame; if the good priest shows his face here, he will be thrown into the horse-pond, and sent home with a ticket pinned to his back. Them that is to do it are on the watch now, and have got their orders; and 'tis a burning shame. To be sure I am not a Catholic; but religion is religion, and a more heavenly face I never saw; and for it to be dragged through a filthy horse-pond!"

Mrs. Gaunt clutched her inspector's arm and turned pale. "The villains! the fiends!" she gasped. "Go ask your master to come to me this moment."

Ryder took a step or two, then stopped. "Alack, dame," said she, "that is not the way to do. You may be sure the others would not dare if my master had not shown them his mind."

Mrs. Gaunt stopped her ears. "Don't tell me that he has ordered this impious, cruel, cowardly act. He is a lion, and this comes from the heart of cowardly curs. What is to be done, woman? Tell me, for you are cooler than I am."

"Well, dame, if I were in your place, I'd just send him a line, and bid him stay away till the storm blows over."

"You are right. But who is to carry it? My own servants are traitors to me."

"I'll carry it myself."

"You shall. Put on your hat, and run through the wood; that is the shortest way."

She wrote a few lines on a large sheet of paper, for note-paper there was none in those days; sealed it, and gave it to Ryder.

Ryder retired to put on her hat, and pry into the letter with greedy eyes.

It ran thus:

"DEAR FATHER AND FRIEND,—You must come hither no more at present. Ask the bearer why this is, for I am ashamed to put it on paper. Pray for them; for you can, but I can not. Pray for me too, bereft for a time of your counsels. I shall come and confess to you in a few days, when we are cooler, but you shall

honor *his* house no more. Obey *me* in this one thing, who shall obey you in all things else, and am your indignant and sorrowful daughter,

"CATHARINE GAUNT."

"No more than that?" said Ryder. "Ay, she guessed as I should look."

She whipped on her hat and went out.

Who should she meet, or, I might say, run against at the hall door but Father Leonard.

He had come at once in compliance with Mrs. Gaunt's request.

CHAPTER XXII.

MRS. RYDER uttered a little scream of dismay. The priest smiled, and said sweetly, "Forgive me, mistress, I fear I startled you."

"Indeed you did, sir," said she. She looked furtively round, and saw Leicester and his underling on the watch.

Leicester, unaware of her treachery, made her a signal of intelligence.

She responded to it, to gain time.

It was a ticklish situation. Some would have lost their heads. Ryder was alarmed, but all the more able to defend her plans. Her first move, as usual with such women, was—a lie.

"Our dame is in the Grove, sir," said she. "I am to bring you to her."

The priest bowed his head gravely, and moved toward the Grove with downcast eyes. Ryder kept close to him for a few steps; then she ran to Leicester, and whispered hastily, "Go you to the stable-gate; I'll bring him round that way: hide now; he suspects."

"Ay, ay," said Leicester; and the confiding pair slipped away round a corner to wait for their victim.

Ryder hurried him into the Grove, and, as soon as she had got him out of hearing, told him the truth.

He turned pale; for these delicate organizations do not generally excel in courage.

Ryder pitied him, and something of womanly feeling began to mingle with her plans. "They shall not lay a finger on you, sir," said she. "I'll scratch and scream, and bring the whole parish out sooner; but the best way is not to give them the chance: please you follow me." And she hurried him through the Grove, and then into an unfrequented path of the great wood.

When they were safe from pursuit she turned and looked at him. He was a good deal agitated, but the uppermost sentiment was gratitude. It soon found words, and, as usual, happy ones. He thanked her with dignity and tenderness for the service she had done him, and asked her if she was a Catholic.

"No," said she.

At that his countenance fell, but only for a moment. "Ah! would you were," he said, earnestly. He then added, sweetly, "To be sure I have all the more reason to be grateful to you."

"You are very welcome, reverend sir," said Ryder, graciously. "Religion is religion; and 'tis a barbarous thing that violence should be done to men of your cloth."

Having thus won his heart, the artful woman

began at one and the same time to please and to probe him. "Sir," said she, "be of good heart; they have done you no harm, and themselves no good; my mistress will hate them for it, and love you all the more."

Father Leonard's pale cheek colored all over at these words, though he said nothing.

"Since they won't let you come to her, she will come to you."

"Do you think so?" said he, faintly.

"Nay, I am sure of it, sir. So would any woman. We still follow our hearts, and get our way by hook or by crook."

Again the priest colored either with pleasure or with shame, or with both; and the keen feminine eye perused him with microscopic power. She waited, to give him an opportunity of talking to her and laying bare his feelings; but he was either too delicate, too cautious, or too pure.

So then she suddenly affected to remember her mistress's letter. She produced it with an apology. He took it with unfeigned eagerness, and read it in silence; and, having read it, he stood patient, with the tears in his eyes. Ryder eyed him with much curiosity and a little pity. "Don't you take on for that," said she. "Why, she will be more at her ease when she visits you at your place than here; and she won't give you up, I promise."

The priest trembled, and Ryder saw it.

"But, my daughter," said he, "I am perplexed and grieved. It seems that I make mischief in your house; that is an ill office; I fear it is my duty to retire from this place altogether, rather than cause dissension between those whom the Church by holy sacrament hath bound together." So saying, he hung his head and sighed.

Ryder eyed him with a little pity, but more contempt.

"Why take other people's faults on your back?" said she. "My mistress is tied to a man she does not love; but that is not your fault; and he is jealous of you, that never gave him cause. If I was a man he should not accuse me—for nothing, nor set his man on to drag me through a horse-pond—for nothing. I'd have the sweet as well as the bitter."

Father Leonard turned and looked at her with a face full of terror. Some beautiful, honeyed fiend seemed to be entering his heart and tempting it.

"Oh, hush! my daughter, hush!" he said; "what words are these for a virtuous woman to speak and a priest to hear?"

"There, I have offended you by my blunt way," said the cajoling hussy, in soft and timid tones.

"Nay, not so; but oh, speak not so lightly of things that peril the immortal soul."

"Well, I have done," said Ryder. "You are out of danger now, so give you good-day."

He stopped her. "What! before I have thanked you for your goodness? Ah! Mistress Ryder, 'tis on these occasions a priest sins by longing for riches to reward his benefactors. I have naught to offer you but this ring: it was my mother's—my dear mother's."

He took it off his finger to give it her.

But the little bit of goodness that cleaves even to the heart of an intriguante revolted against her avarice.

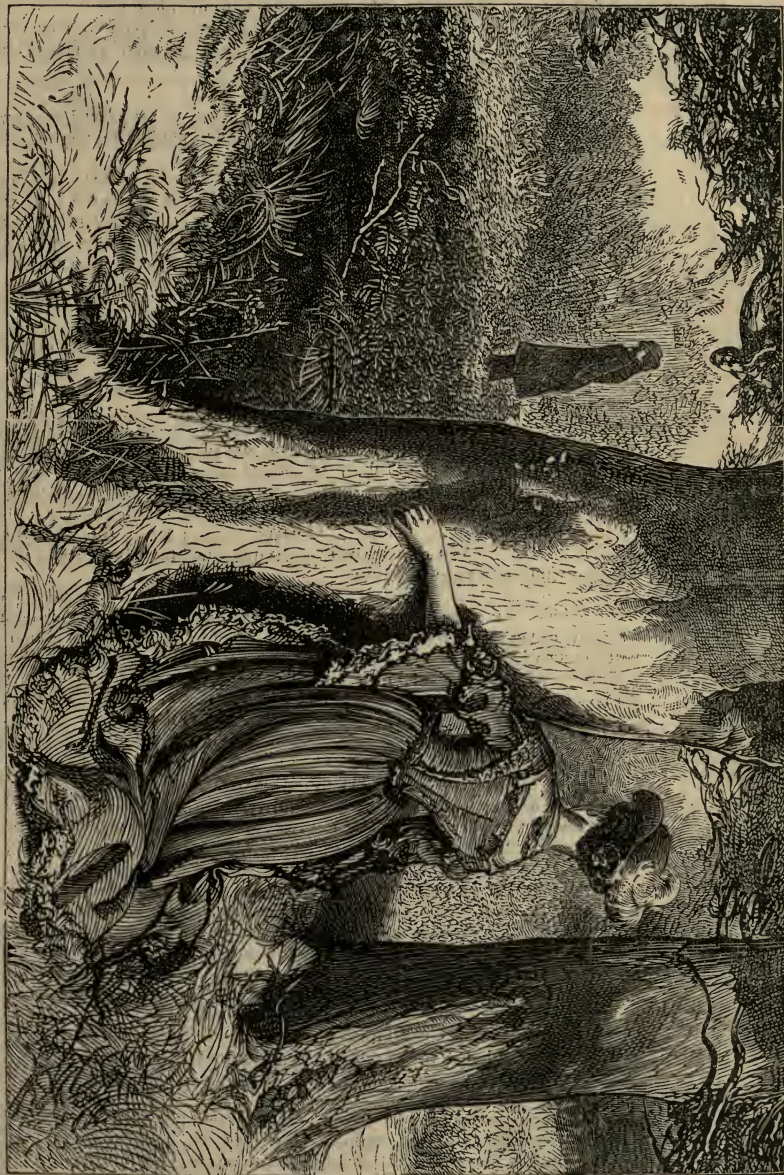
"Nay, poor soul, I'll not take it," said she;

and put her hands before her eyes, not to see it, for she knew she could not look at it long and spare it.

With this she left him; but, ere she had gone far, her cunning and curiosity gained the upper hand again, and she whipped behind a great tree and crouched, invisible all but her nose and one piercing eye.

all who met him he seemed a creature in whom religion had conquered all human frailty.

Caroline Ryder hurried home with cruel exultation in her black eyes. But she soon found that the first thing she had to do was to defend herself. Leicester and his man met her, and the former looked gloomy, and the latter reproached her bitterly; called her a double-faced jade, and



"She whipped behind a great tree, and crouched."

She saw the priest make a few steps homeward, then look around, then take Mrs. Gaunt's letter out of his pocket, press it passionately to his lips, and hide it tenderly in his bosom.

This done, he went home with his eyes on the ground as usual, and measured steps. And to

said he would tell the squire of the trick she had played them. But Ryder had her story ready in a moment. "'Tis you I have saved, not him," said she. "He is something more than mortal: why, he told me of his own accord what you were there for; but that, if you were so unlucky as to

lay hands on him, you would not live. It seems that has been tried out Stanhope way; a man did but give him a blow, and his arm was stiff next day, and he never used it again; and next his hair fell off his head, and then his eyes they turned to water and ran all out of him, and he died within the twelvemonth."

Country folk were nearly, though not quite, as superstitious at that time as in the Middle Ages. "Murrain on him," said Leicester. "Catch me laying a finger on him. I'm glad he is gone; and I hope he won't never come back no more."

"Not likely, since he can read all our hearts. Why, he told me something about you, Tom Leicester; he says you are in love."

"No! did he really, now?" and Leicester opened his eyes very wide. "And did he tell you who the lass is?"

"He did so; and surprised me properly." This with a haughty glance.

Leicester held his tongue and turned red.

"Who is it, mistress?" asked the helper.

"He didn't say I was to tell *you*, young man."

And with these two pricks of her needle she left them both more or less discomfited, and went to scrutinize and anatomize her mistress's heart with plenty of cunning, but no mercy. She related her own part in the affair very briefly, but dwelt with well-feigned sympathy on the priest's feelings. "He turned as white as a sheet, ma'am, when I told him, and offered me his very ring off his finger, he was so grateful; poor man!"

"You don't take it, I hope?" said Mrs. Gaunt, quickly.

"La, no, ma'am. I hadn't the heart."

Mrs. Gaunt was silent a while. When she spoke again it was to inquire whether Ryder had given him the letter.

"That I did; and it brought the tears into his poor eyes; and such beautiful eyes as he has, to be sure! You would have pitied him if you had seen him read it, and cry over it, and then kiss it, and put it in his bosom, he did."

Mrs. Gaunt said nothing, but turned her head away.

The operator shot a sly glance into the looking-glass, and saw a pearly tear trickling down her subject's fair cheek. So she went on, all sympathy outside, and remorselessness within. "To think of that face, more like an angel's than a man's, to be dragged through a nasty horse-pond. 'Tis a shame of master to set his men on a clergyman." And so was proceeding, with well-acted and catching warmth, to dig as dangerous a pit for Mrs. Gaunt as ever was dug for any lady; for whatever Mrs. Gaunt had been betrayed into saying, this Ryder would have used without mercy, and with diabolical skill.

Yes, it was a pit, and the lady's pure but tender heart pushed her toward it, and her fiery temper drew her toward it.

Yet she escaped it this time. The indignity, delicacy, and pride, that is oftener found in these old families than out of them, saved her from that peril. She did not see the trap, but she spurned the bait by native instinct.

She threw up her hand in a moment with a queenly gesture, and stopped the tempter.

"Not—one—word—from my servant against my husband in *my* hearing!" said she, superbly.

And Ryder shrank back into herself directly.

"Child," said Mrs. Gaunt, "you have done me

a great service, and my husband too; for, if this dastardly act had been done in his name, he would soon have been heartily ashamed of it and deplored it. Such services can never be quite repaid; but you will find a purse in that drawer with five guineas; it is yours; and my lavender silk dress, be pleased to wear that about me, to remind me of the good office you have done me. And now, all you can do for me is to leave me, for I am very, very unhappy."

Ryder retired with the spoil, and Mrs. Gaunt leaned her head over her chair, and cried without stint.

After this, no angry words passed between Mr. and Mrs. Gaunt; but something worse, a settled coolness sprung up.

As for Griffith, his cook kept her place, and the priest came no more to the castle; so, having outwardly gained the day, he was ready to forget and forgive; but Kate, though she would not let her servant speak ill of Griffith, was deeply indignant and disgusted with him. She met his advances with such a stern coldness that he turned sulky and bitter in his turn.

Husband and wife saw little of each other, and hardly spoke.

Both were unhappy; but Kate was angriest, and Griffith saddest.

In an evil hour he let out his grief to Caroline Ryder. She seized the opportunity, and, by a show of affectionate sympathy and zeal, made herself almost necessary to him, and contrived to establish a very perilous relation between him and her. Matters went so far as this, that the poor man's eye used to brighten when he saw her coming.

Yet this victory cost her a sore heart and all the patient self-denial of her sex. To be welcome to Griffith, she had to speak to him of her rival, and to speak well of her. She tried talking of herself and her attachment; he yawned in her face; she tried smooth detraction and innuendo; he fired up directly and defended her, of whose conduct he had been complaining the very moment before.

Then she saw that there was but one way to the man's heart. Sore, and sick, and smiling, she took that way, resolving to bide her time, to worm herself in anyhow, and wait patiently till she could venture to thrust her mistress out.

If any of my readers need be told why this she-Machiavel threw her fellow-conspirators over, the reason was simply this: on calm reflection, she saw it was not her interest to get Father Leonard insulted. She looked on him as her mistress's lover and her own best friend. "Was I mad?" said she to herself. "My business is to keep him sweet upon her till they can't live without one another, and then I'll tell *him*, and take your place in this house, my lady."

And now it is time to visit that extraordinary man who was the cause of all this mischief; whom Gaunt called a villain, and Mrs. Gaunt a saint; and, as usual, he was neither one nor the other.

Father Leonard was a pious, pure, and noble-minded man, who had undertaken to defy Nature with Religion's aid, and, after years of successful warfare, now sustained one of those defeats to which such warriors have been liable in every age. If his heart was pure, it was tender; and Nature

never intended him to live all his days alone. After years of prudent coldness to the other sex, he fell in with a creature that put him off his guard at first, she seemed so angelic. "At Wisdom's gate Suspicion slept;" and, by degrees, which have been already indicated in this narrative, she whom the Church had committed to his spiritual care became his idol. Could he have foreseen this, it would never have happened; he would have steeled himself, or left the country that contained this sweet temptation. But love stole on him, masked with religious zeal, and robed in a garment of light that seemed celestial.

When the mask fell it was too late; the power to resist the soft and thrilling enchantment was gone. The solitary man was too deep in love.

Yet he clung still to that self-deception, without which he never could have been entrapped into an earthly passion: he never breathed a word of love to her. It would have alarmed her; it would have alarmed himself. Every syllable that passed between these two might have been published without scandal. But the heart does not speak by words alone: there are looks, and there are tones of voice that belong to love, and are his signs, his weapons; and it was in these very tones the priest murmured to his gentle listener about "the angelic life" between spirits still lingering on earth, but purged from earthly dross; and even about other topics less captivating to the religious imagination. He had persuaded her to found a school in this dark parish, and in it he taught the poor with exemplary and touching patience. Well, when he spoke to her about this school, it was in words of practical good sense, but in tones of love; and she, being one of those feminine women who catch the tone they are addressed in, and instinctively answer in tune, and, moreover, seeing no ill, but good, in the *subject* of their conversation, replied sometimes, unguardedly enough, in accents almost as tender.

In truth, if Love was really a personage, as the heathens feigned, he must have often perched on a tree in that quiet grove, and chuckled and mocked when this man and woman sat and murmured together, in the soft seducing twilight, about the love of God.

And now things had come to a crisis. Husband and wife went about the house silent and gloomy, the ghosts of their former selves; and the priest sat solitary, benighted, bereaved of the one human creature he cared for. Day succeeded to day, and still she never came. Every morning he said, "She will come to-day," and brightened with the hope. But the leaden hours crept by, and still she came not.

Three sorrowful weeks went by, and he fell into deep dejection. He used to wander out at night, and come and stand where he could see her windows with the moon shining on them; then go slowly home, cold in body, and with his heart aching, lonely, deserted, and perhaps forgotten. Oh, never till now had he known the utter aching sense of being quite alone in this weary world.

One day, as he sat, drooping and listless, there came a light foot along the passage, a light tap at the door, and the next moment she stood before him, a little paler than usual, but lovelier than ever, for celestial pity softened her noble features.

The priest started up with a cry of joy that

ought to have warned her; but it only brought a faint blush of pleasure to her cheek and the brimming tears to her eyes.

"Dear father and friend," said she. "What! have you missed me? Think, then, how I have missed *you*. But 'twas best for us both to let their vile passions cool first."

Leonard could not immediately reply. The emotion of seeing her again so suddenly almost choked him.

He needed all the self-possession he had been years acquiring not to throw himself at her knees and declare his passion to her.

Mrs. Gaunt saw his agitation, but did not interpret it aright.

She came eagerly and sat on a stool beside him. "Dear father," she said, "do not let their insolence grieve you. They have smarted for it, and *shall* smart till they make their submission to you, and beg and entreat you to come to us again. Meantime, since you can not visit me, I visit you. Confess me, father, and then direct me with your counsels. Ah! if you could but give me the Christian temper to carry them out firmly but meekly! 'Tis my ungoverned spirit hath wrought all this mischief, *mea culpa! mea culpa!*"

By this time Leonard had recovered his self-possession, and he spent an hour of strange intoxication confessing his idol, sentencing his idol to light penances, directing and advising his idol, and all in the soft murmurs of a lover.

She left him, and the room seemed to darken.

Two days only elapsed, and she came again. Visit succeeded to visit; and her affection seemed boundless.

The insult he had received was to be avenged in one place, and healed in another, and, if possible, effaced with tender hand.

So she kept all her sweetness for that little cottage, and all her acidity for Hershaw Castle.

It was an evil hour when Griffith attacked her saint with violence. The woman was too high-spirited, and too sure of her own rectitude, to endure that; so, instead of crushing her, it drove her to retaliation and to imprudence.

These visits to console Father Leonard were quietly watched by Ryder, for one thing. But, worse than that, they placed Mrs. Gaunt in a new position with Leonard, and one that melts the female heart. She was now the protectress and the consoler of a man she admired and revered. I say if any thing on earth can breed love in a grand female bosom, this will.

She had put her foot on a sunny slope clad with innocent-looking flowers, but more and more precipitous at every step, and perdition at the bottom.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FATHER LEONARD, visited, soothed, and petted by his idol, recovered his spirits, and, if he pined during her absence, he was always so joyful in her presence that she thought, of course, he was permanently happy; so then, being by nature magnanimous and placable, she began to smile on her husband again, and a tacit reconciliation came about by natural degrees.

But this produced a startling result.

Leonard, as her confessor, had only to follow

precedents, and ask questions his Church has printed for the use of confessors, and he soon learned enough to infer that their disunion had given way.

The consequence was that one day, being off his guard, or literally unable to contain his bursting heart any longer, he uttered a cry of jealous agony, and then, in a torrent of burning, melting words, appealed to her pity. He painted her husband's happiness and his own misery and barren desolation with a fervid, passionate eloquence that paralyzed his hearer, and left her pale and trembling, and the tears of pity trickling down her cheek.

Those silent tears calmed him a little, and he begged her forgiveness, and awaited his doom.

"I pity you," said she, angelically. "What! you jealous of my husband? Oh, pray to Christ and our Lady to cure you of this folly."

She rose, fluttering inwardly, but calm as a statue on the outside, gave him her hand, and went home very slowly, and the moment she was out of his sight she drooped her head like a crushed flower. She was sad, ashamed, alarmed.

Her mind was in a whirl; and, were I to imitate those writers who undertake to dissect and analyze the heart at such moments, and put the exact result on paper, I should be apt to sacrifice truth to precision; I must stick to my old plan, and tell you what she did: that will surely be some index to her mind, especially with my female readers.

She went home straight to her husband; he was smoking his pipe after dinner. She drew her chair close to him, and laid her hand tenderly on his shoulder. "Griffith," she said, "will you grant your wife a favor? You once promised to take me abroad: I desire to go now: I long to see foreign countries: I am tired of this place. I want a change. Prithee, prithee take me hence this very day."

Griffith looked aghast. "Why, sweetheart, it takes a deal of money to go abroad; we must get in our rents first."

"Nay, I have a hundred pounds laid by."

"Well, but what a fancy to take all of a sudden!"

"Oh, Griffith, don't deny me what I ask you, with my arm round your neck, dearest. It is no fancy. I want to be alone with you, far from this place where coolness has come between us." And with this she fell to crying and sobbing, and straining him tight to her bosom, as if she feared to lose him or be taken from him.

Griffith kissed her, and told her to cheer up; he was not the man to deny her any thing. "Just let me get my hay in," said he, "and I'll take you to Rome, if you like."

"No, no; to-day, or to-morrow at farthest, or you don't love me as I deserve to be loved by you this day."

"Now, Kate, my darling, be reasonable. I must get my hay in, and then I am your man."

Mrs. Gaunt had gradually sunk almost to her knees. She now started up with nostrils expanding and her blue eyes glittering. "Your hay!" she cried, with bitter contempt; "your hay before your wife? That is how you love me."

And, the next moment, she seemed to turn from a fiery woman to a glacier.

Griffith smiled at all this with that lordly superiority the male of our species sometimes wears

when he is behaving like a dull ass, and smoked his pipe, and resolved to indulge her whim as soon as ever he had got his hay in.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SHOWERY weather set in, and the hay had to be turned twice, and left in cocks instead of carried.

Griffith spoke now and then about the foreign tour, but Kate declined no reply whatever, and the chilled topic died out before the wet hay could be got in; and so much for Procrastination.

Meantime Betty Gough was sent for to mend the house-linen. She came every other day after dinner, and sat working alone beside Mrs. Gaunt till dark.

Caroline Ryder put her own construction on this, and tried to make friends with Mrs. Gough, intending to pump her. But Mrs. Gough gave her short, dry answers. Ryder then felt sure that Gough was a go-between, and, woman-like, turned up her nose at her with marked contempt. For why? This office of go-between was one she especially coveted for herself under the circumstances, and a little while ago it had seemed within her grasp.

One fine afternoon the hay was all carried, and Griffith came home in good spirits to tell his wife he was ready to make the grand tour with her.

He was met at the gate by Mrs. Gough with a face of great concern. She begged him to come and see the dame; she had slipped on the oak stairs, poor soul! and hurt her back.

Griffith tore up the stairs, and found Kate in the drawing-room lying on a sofa, and her doctor by her side. He came in, trembling like a leaf, and clasped her piteously in his arms. At this she uttered a little patient sigh of pain, and the doctor begged him to moderate himself; there was no immediate cause of alarm; but she must be kept quiet. She had strained her back, and her nerves were shaken by the fall.

"Oh, my poor Kate!" cried Griffith; and would let nobody else touch her. She was no longer a tall girl, but a statuesque woman; yet he carried her in his Herculean arms up to her bed. She turned her head toward him and shed a gentle tear at this proof of his love, but the next moment she was cold again, and seemed weary of her life.

An invalid's bed was sent to her by the doctor at her own request, and placed on a small bedstead. She lay on this at night, and on a sofa by day.

Griffith was now as good as a widower, and Caroline Ryder improved the opportunity. She threw herself constantly in his way, all smiles, small talk, and geniality.

Like many healthy men, your sickness wearied him if it lasted over two days; and whenever he came out, chilled and discontented, from his invalid wife, there was a fine, buoyant, healthy young woman ready to chat with him, and brimming over with undisguised admiration.

True, she was only a servant—a servant to the core. But she had been always about ladies, and could wear their surface as readily as she could their gowns. Moreover, Griffith himself lacked dignity and reserve: he would talk to any body.

The two women began to fill the relative situations of clouds and sunshine.

But, ere this had lasted long, the enticing contact with the object of her lawless fancy inflamed Ryder, and made her so impatient that she struck her long-meditated blow a little prematurely.

The passage outside Mrs. Gaunt's door had a large window; and one day, while Griffith was with his wife, Ryder composed herself on the window-seat in a forlorn attitude, too striking and unlike her usual gay demeanor to pass unnoticed.

Griffith came out and saw this drooping, discolorate figure. "Hallo!" said he, "what is wrong with *you*?" a little fretfully.

A deep sigh was the only response.

"Had words with your sweetheart?"

"You know I have no sweetheart, sir."

The good-natured squire made an attempt or two to console her and find out what was the matter, but he could get nothing out of her but monosyllables and sighs. At last the crocodile contrived to cry; and, having thus secured his pity, she said, "There, never heed me. I'm a foolish woman; I can't bear to see my dear master so abused."

"What d'ye mean?" said Griffith, sternly. Her very first shaft wounded his peace of mind.

"Oh, no matter! Why should I be your friend and my own enemy? If I tell you I shall lose my place."

"Nonsense, girl, you shall never lose your place while I am here."

"Well, I hope not, sir, for I am very happy here—too happy, methinks, when *you* speak kindly to me. Take no notice of what I said. 'Tis best to be blind at times."

The simple squire did not see that this artful creature was playing the stale game of her sex—stimulating his curiosity under pretense of putting him off. He began to fret with suspicion and curiosity, and insisted on her speaking out.

"Ah! but I am so afraid you will hate me," said she, "and that will be worse than losing my place."

Griffith stamped on the ground. "What is it?" said he, fiercely.

Ryder seemed frightened. "It is nothing," said she; then she paused, and added, "but my folly. I can't bear to see you waste your feelings. She is not so ill as you fancy."

"Do you mean to say that my wife is pretending?"

"How can I say that? I wasn't there; *nobody* saw her full, nor heard her either, and the house full of people. No doubt there is something the matter with her, but I do believe her heart is in more trouble than her back."

"And what troubles her heart? Tell me, and she shall not fret long."

"Well, sir, then just you send for Father Leonard, and she will get up, and walk as she used, and smile on you as she used. That man is the main of her sickness, you take my word."

Griffith turned sick at heart; and the strong man literally staggered at this envenomed thrust of a weak woman's tongue. But he struggled with the poison.

"What d'ye mean, woman?" said he. "The priest hasn't been near her these two months."

"That is it, sir," replied Ryder, quietly; "*he* is too wise to come here against your will, and *she* is bitter against you for frightening him away. Ask yourself, sir, didn't she change to

you the moment that you threatened that Leonard with the horse-pond?"

"That is true!" gasped the wretched husband.

Yet he struggled again. "But she made it up with me after that. Why, 'twas but the other day she begged me to go abroad with her, and take her away from this place."

"Ah? indeed!" said Ryder, bending her black brows, "did she so?"

"That she did," said Griffith, joyfully: "so you see you are mistaken."

"You should have taken her at her word, sir," was all the woman's reply.

"Well, you see, the hay was out, so I put it off; and then came the cursed rain day after day, and so she cooled upon it."

"Of course she did, sir." Then, with a solemnity that appalled her miserable listener, "I'd give all I'm worth if you had taken her at her word that minute. But that is the way with you gentlemen; you let the occasion slip, and we that be women never forgive that: she won't give you the same chance again, I know. Now, if I was not afraid to make you unhappy, I'd tell you why she asked you to go abroad. She felt herself weak and saw her danger; she found she could not resist that Leonard any longer, and she had the sense to see it wasn't worth her while to ruin herself for him, so she asked you to save her from him—that is the plain English. And you didn't."

At this Griffith's face wore an expression of agony so horrible that Ryder hesitated in her course. "There, there," said she, "pray don't look so, dear master! After all, there's nothing certain; and perhaps I am too severe where I see you ill treated; and, to be sure, no woman could be cold to *you* unless she was bewitched out of her seven senses by some other man. I couldn't use you as mistress does; but then there's nobody I care a straw for in these parts except my dear master."

Griffith took no notice of this overture; the potent poison of jealousy was coursing through all his veins and distorting his ghastly face.

"O God!" he gasped, "can this thing be? My wife! the mother of my child! It is a lie! I can't believe it—I won't believe it. Have pity on me, woman, and think again, and unsay your words; for, if 'tis so, there will be murder in this house."

Ryder was alarmed. "Don't talk so," said she, hastily, "no woman born is worth that; besides, as you say, what do we know against her? She is a gentlewoman, and well brought up. Now, dear master, you have got one friend in this house, and that is me: I know women better than you do. Will you be ruled by me?"

"Yes, I will; for I do believe you care a little for me."

"Then don't you believe any thing against our dame. Keep quiet till you know more. Don't you be so simple as to accuse her to her face, or you'll never learn the truth. Just you watch her quietly, without seeming, and I'll help you. Be a man, and know the truth."

"I will!" said Griffith, grinding his teeth, "and I believe she will come out pure as snow."

"Well, I hope so too," said Ryder, dryly. Then she added, "But don't you be seen speaking to me too much, sir, or she will suspect me, and then she will be on her guard with *me*."

When I have any thing particular to tell you, I'll cough—so, and then I'll run out into the Grove: nobody goes there now."

Griffith did not see the hussy was contriving a series of assignations. He fell into the trap bodily.

The life this man led was now infernal.

He watched his wife night and day to detect her heart; he gave up hunting, he deserted the "Red Lion;" if he went out of doors, it was but a step; he hovered about the place to see if messages came or went; and he spent hours in his wife's bedroom, watching her, grim, silent, and sombre, to detect her inmost heart. His flesh wasted visibly, and his ruddy color paled. Hell was in his heart. Ay, two hells—jealousy and suspense.

Mrs. Gaunt saw directly that something was amiss, and ere long she divined what it was.

But, if he was jealous, she was proud as Lucifer. So she met his ever-watchful eye with the face of a marble statue.

Only in secret her heart quaked and yearned, and she shed many a furtive tear, and was sore, sore perplexed.

Meantime Ryder was playing with her master's anguish like a cat with a mouse.

Upon the pretense of some petty discovery or other, she got him out day after day into the Grove, and, to make him believe in her candor and impartiality, would give him feeble reasons for thinking his wife loved him still, taking care to overpower these reasons with some little piece of strong good sense and subtle observation.

It is the fate of moral poisoners to poison themselves as well as their victims. This is a just retribution, and it fell upon this female Iago. Her wretched master now loved his wife to distraction, yet hated her to the death; and Ryder loved her master passionately, yet hated him intensely, by fits and starts.

These secret meetings on which she had counted so, what did she gain by them? She saw that, with all her beauty, intelligence, and zeal for him, she was nothing to him still. He suspected, he sometimes hated his wife, but he was always full of her. There was no getting any other wedge into his heart.

This so embittered Ryder that one day she revenged herself on him.

He had been saying that no earthly torment could equal his; all his watching had shown him nothing for certain. "Oh," said he, "if I could only get proof of her innocence or proof of her guilt! Any thing better than the misery of doubt. It gnaws my heart, it consumes my flesh. I can't sleep, I can't eat, I can't sit down. I envy the dead that lie at peace. Oh, my heart! my heart!"

"And all for a woman that is not young, nor half so handsome as yourself. Well, sir, I'll try and cure you of your *doubt*, if that is what torments you. When you threatened that Leonard, he got his orders to come here no more. But she visited him at his place again and again."

"'Tis false! How know you that?"

"As soon as your back was turned she used to order her horse and ride to him."

"How do you know she went to him?"

"I mounted the tower, and saw the way she took."

Griffith's face was a piteous sight. He stammered out, "Well, he is her confessor. She always visited him at times."

"Ay, sir; but in those days her blood was cool, and his too; but bethink you now, when you threatened the man with the horse-pond, he became your enemy. All revenge is sweet, but what revenge is so sweet to any man as that which came to his arms of its own accord? I do notice that men can't read men, but any woman can read a woman. Maids they are reserved, because their mothers have told them that is the only way to get married. But what have a wife and a priest to keep them distant? Can they ever hope to come together lawfully? That is why a priest's light-o'-love is always some honest man's wife. What had those two to keep them from folly? Old Betty Gough? Why, the mistress had bought her, body and soul, long ago. No, sir, you had no friend there; and you had three enemies—love, revenge, and opportunity. Why, what did the priest say to me? I met him not ten yards from here. 'Ware the horse-pond!' says I. Says he, '*Since I am to have the bitter, I'll have the sweet as well.*'"

These infernal words were not spoken in vain. Griffith's features were horribly distorted, his eyes rolled fearfully, and he fell to the ground, grinding his teeth, and foaming at the mouth. An epileptic fit!

An epileptic fit is a terrible sight; the simple description of one in our medical books is appalling.

And in this case it was all the more fearful, the subject being so strong and active.

Caroline Ryder shrieked with terror, but no one heard her; at all events, no one came; to be sure, the place had a bad name for ghosts, etc.

She tried to hold his head, but could not, for his body kept bounding from the earth with inconceivable elasticity and fury, and his arms flew in every direction; and presently Ryder received a violent blow that almost stunned her.

She lay groaning and trembling beside the victim of her poisonous tongue and of his own passion.

When she recovered herself he was snorting rather than breathing, but lying still and pale enough, his eyes set and glassy.

She got up, and went with uneven steps to a little rill hard by, and plunged her face in it; then filled her beaver hat, and came and dashed water repeatedly in his face.

He came to his senses by degrees, but was weak as an infant. Then Ryder wiped the foam from his lips, and, kneeling on her knees, laid a soft hand upon his heavy head, shedding tears of pity and remorse, and sick at heart herself.

For what had she gained by blackening her rival? The sight of *his* bodily agony, and *his* ineradicable love.

Mrs. Gaunt sat out of shot, cold, calm, superior.

Yet, in the desperation of her passion, it was something to nurse his weak head an instant and shed hot tears upon his brow; it was a positive joy, and soon proved a fresh and inevitable temptation.

"My poor master," said she, tenderly, "I

* Compare this statement with p. 66.

never will say a word to you again. It is better to be blind. My God! how you cling to her that feigns a broken back to be rid of you, when there are others as well to look at, and ever so much younger, that adore every hair on your head, and would follow you round the world for one kind look."

"Let no one love me like that," said Griffith, feebly; "to love so is to be miserable."

"Pity her, then, at least," murmured Ryder; and, feeling she had quite committed herself now, her bosom panted under Griffith's ear, and told him the secret she had kept till now.

My female readers will sneer at this temptation; my male readers know that scarcely one man out of a dozen, sick, sore, and hating her he loved, would have turned away from the illicit consolation thus offered to him in his hour of weakness with soft seducing tones, warm tears, and heart that panted at his ear.

CHAPTER XXV.

How did poor faulty Griffith receive it?

He raised his head, and turned his brown eye gently but full upon her. "My poor girl," said he, "I see what you are driving at. But that will not do. I have nothing to give you in exchange. I hate my wife that I loved so dear; d—n her! d—n her! But I hate all woman-kind for her sake. Keep you clear of me. I would ruin no poor girl for heartless sport. I shall have blood on my hands ere long, and that is enough."

And, with these alarming words, he seemed suddenly to recover all his vigor; for he rose and stalked away at once, and never looked behind him.

Ryder made no farther attempt. She sat down and shed bitter tears of sorrow and mortification.

After this cruel rebuff she must hate somebody, and, with the justice of her sex, she pitched on Mrs. Gaunt, and hated her like a demon, and watched to do her mischief by hook or by crook.

Griffith's appearance and manner caused Mrs. Gaunt very serious anxiety. His clothes hung loose on his wasted frame; his face was of one uniform sallow tint, like a maniac's; and he sat silent for hours beside his wife, eying her askant from time to time like a surly mastiff guarding some treasure.

She divined what was passing in his mind, and tried to soothe him, but almost in vain. He was sometimes softened for the moment; but *heret lateri lethalis arundo*; he still hovered about, watching her and tormenting himself, gnawed mad by three vultures of the mind—doubt, jealousy, and suspense.

Then Mrs. Gaunt wrote letters to Father Leonard; hitherto she had only sent him short messages.

Betty Gough carried these letters and brought the answers.

Griffith, thanks to the hint Ryder had given him, suspected this, and waylaid the old woman, and roughly demanded to see the letter she was carrying. She stoutly protested she had none. He seized her, turned her pockets inside out, and

found a bunch of keys; item, a printed dialogue between Peter and Herod, omitted in the canonical books, but described by the modern discoverer as an infallible charm for the toothache; item, a brass thimble; item, half a nutmeg.

"Curse your cunning," said he; and went off muttering.

The old woman tottered trembling to Mrs. Gaunt, related this outrage with an air of injured innocence, then removed her cap, undid her hair, and took out a letter from Leonard.

"This must end, and shall," said Mrs. Gaunt, firmly, "else it will drive him mad and me too."

Bolton fair-day came. It was a great fair, and had attractions for all classes. There were cattle and horses of all kinds for sale, and also shows, games, wrestling, and dancing till day-break.

All the servants had a prescriptive right to go to this fair, and Griffith himself had never missed one. He told Kate overnight he would go if it were not for leaving her alone.

The words were kinder than their meaning, but Mrs. Gaunt had the tact or the candor to take them in their best sense. "And I would go with you, my dear," said she, "but I should only be a drag. Never heed me; give yourself a day's pleasure, for indeed you need it. I am in care about you, you are so dull of late."

"Well, I will," said Griffith. "I'll not mope here when all the rest are merry-making."

Accordingly, next day, about eleven in the morning, he mounted his horse and rode to the fair, leaving the house empty, for all the servants were gone except the old housekeeper; she was tied to the fireside by rheumatics. Even Ryder started, with a new bonnet and red ribbons; but that was only a blind. She slipped back and got unperceived into her own bedroom.

Griffith ran through the fair, but could not enjoy it. *Hærebāt lateri arundo*. He came galloping back to watch his wife, and see whether Betty Gough had come again or not.

As he rode into the stable-yard he caught sight of Ryder's face at an upper window. She looked pale and agitated, and her black eyes flashed with a strange expression. She made him a signal which he did not understand, but she joined him directly after in the stable-yard.

"Come quietly with me," said she, solemnly.

He hooked his horse's rein to the wall, and followed her, trembling.

She took him up the back stairs, and, when she got on the landing, she turned and said, "Where did you leave her?"

"In her own room."

"See if she is there now," said Ryder, pointing to the door.

Griffith tore the door open; the room was empty.

"Nor is she to be found in the house," said Ryder, "for I've been in every room."

Griffith's face turned livid, and he staggered and leaned against the wall. "Where is she?" said he, hoarsely.

"Humph!" said Ryder, fiendishly. "Find him, and you will find her."

"I'll find them if they are above ground," cried Griffith, furiously, and he rushed into his bedroom and soon came out again, with a fearful purpose written on his ghastly features and

in his bloodshot eyes, and a loaded pistol in his hand.

Ryder was terrified; but, instead of succumbing to terror, she flew at him like a cat and wreathed her arms round him.

"What would you do?" cried she. "Madman, would you hang for them, and break my heart?—the only woman in the world that loves you. Give me the pistol. Nay, I will have it."

And, with that extraordinary power excitement lends her sex, she wrenched it out of his hands.

He gnashed his teeth with fury, and clutched her with a gripe of iron. She screamed with pain: he relaxed his grasp a little at that: she turned on him and defied him.

"I won't let you get into trouble for a priest and a wanton," she cried; "you shall kill me first. Leave me the pistol, and pledge me your sacred word to do them no harm, and then I'll tell you where they are. Refuse me this, and you shall go to your grave and know nothing more than you know now."

"No, no; if you are a woman, have pity on me; let me come at them. There, I'll use no weapon. I'll tear them to atoms with these hands. Where are they?"

"May I put the pistol away, then?"

"Yes, take it out of my sight; so best. Where are they?"

Ryder locked the pistol up in one of Mrs. Gaunt's boxes. Then she said, in a trembling voice, "Follow me."

He followed her in awful silence.

She went rather slowly to the door that opened on the lawn, and then she hesitated. "If you are a man, and have any feeling for a poor girl who loves you—if you are a gentleman, and respect your word—no violence."

"I promise," said he. "Where are they?"

"Nay, nay, I fear I shall rue the day I told you. Promise me once more: no bloodshed—upon your soul."

"I promise. Where are they?"

"God forgive me; they are in the Grove."

He bounded away from her like some beast of prey, and she crouched and trembled on the steps of the door; and, now that she realized what she was doing, a sickening sense of dire misgiving came over her and made her feel quite faint.

And so the weak, but dangerous creature sat crouching and quaking, and launched the strong one.

Griffith was soon in the Grove, and the first thing he saw was Leonard and his wife walking together in earnest conversation. Their backs were toward him. Mrs. Gaunt, whom he had left lying on a sofa, and who professed herself scarce able to walk half a dozen times across the room, was now springing along, elastic as a young greyhound, and full of fire and animation. The miserable husband saw, and his heart died within him.

He leaned against a tree and groaned.

The deadly sickness of his heart soon gave way to sombre fury. He came softly after them, with ghastly cheek, and bloodthirsty eyes like red-hot coals.

They stopped, and he heard his wife say, "Tis a solemn promise, then—this very night." The priest bowed assent. Then they spoke in so low

a voice he could not hear; but his wife pressed a purse upon Leonard, and Leonard hesitated, but ended by taking it.

Griffith uttered a yell like a tiger, and rushed between them with savage violence, driving the lady one way with his wrists, and the priest another. She screamed; he trembled in silence.

Griffith stood a moment between these two pale faces, silent and awful.

Then he faced his wife. "You vile wretch!" he cried; "so you *buy* your own dishonor and mine." He raised his hand high over her head; she never winced. "Oh! but for my oath, I'd lay you dead at my feet. But no; I'll not hang for a priest and a wanton. So, *this* is the thing you love, and pay it to love you." And, with all the mad inconsistency of rage, which mixes small things and great, he tore the purse out of Leonard's hand, and then seized him felly by the throat.

At that the high spirit of Mrs. Gaunt gave way to abject terror. "Oh, mercy! mercy!" she cried; "it is all a mistake." And she clung to his knees.

He spurned her furiously away. "Don't touch me, woman," he cried, "or you are dead. Look at this!" And in a moment, with gigantic strength and fury, he dashed the priest down at her feet. "I know ye, ye proud devil," he cried; "love the thing you have seen me tread upon—love it, if ye can!" And he literally trampled upon the poor priest with both feet.

Leonard shrieked for mercy.

"None, in this world or the next," roared Griffith; but the next moment he took fright at himself. "God!" he cried, "I must go, or kill. Live and be damned forever, the pair of ye." And with this he fled from them, grinding his teeth and beating the air with his clenched fists.

He darted to the stable-yard, sprang on his horse, and galloped away from Hershaw Castle, with the face, the eyes, the gestures, the incoherent mutterings of a raving Bedlamite.

CHAPTER XXVI.

At the fair the wrestling was ended, and the tongues going over it all again, and throwing the victors; the greasy pole, with leg of mutton attached by ribbons, was being hoisted, and the swings flying, and the lads and lasses footing it to the fife and tabor, and the people chattering in groups, when the clatter of a horse's feet was heard, and a horseman burst in and rode recklessly through the market-place; indeed, if his noble horse had been as rash as he was, some would have been trampled under foot. The rider's face was ghastly; such as were not exactly in his path had time to see it, and wonder how this terrible countenance came into that merry place. Thus, as he passed, shouts of dismay arose, and a space opened before him, and then closed behind him with a great murmur that followed at his heels.

Tom Leicester was listening, spell-bound, on the outskirts of the throng, to the songs and humorous tirades of a peddler selling his wares, and was saying to himself, "I too will be a peddler." Hearing the row, he turned round, and saw his master just coming down with that stricken face.

Tom could not decipher his own name in print or manuscript, and these are the fellows that beat us all at reading countenances; he saw in a moment that some great calamity had fallen on Griffith's head, and nature stirred in him. He darted to his master's side and seized the bridle. "What is up?" he cried.

But Griffith did not answer nor notice; his ears were almost deaf, and his eyes, great and staring, were fixed right ahead, and, to all appearance, he did not see the people; he seemed to be making for the horizon.

"Master! for the love of Heaven, speak to me," cried Leicester. "What have they done to you? Whither be you going, with the face of a ghost?"

"Away, from the hangman," shrieked Griffith, still staring at the horizon. "Stay me not; my hands itch for their throats; my heart thirsts for their blood; but I'll not hang for a priest and a wanton." Then he suddenly turned on Leicester, "Let thou go, or—" and he lifted up his heavy riding-whip.

Then Leicester let go the rein, and the whip descended on the horse's flank; he went clattering furiously over the stones, and drove the thinner groups apart like chaff, and his galloping feet were soon heard fainter and fainter till they died away in the distance. Leicester stood gaping.

Griffith's horse, a black hunter of singular power and beauty, carried his wretched master well that day; he went on till sunset, trotting, cantering, and walking without intermission; the whip ceased to touch him, the rein never checked him. He found he was the master, and he went his own way. He took his broken rider back into the county where he had been foaled. But a few miles from his native place they came to the "Packhorse," a pretty little road-side inn, with farm-yard and buildings at the back. He had often baited there in his infancy; and now, stiff and stumbling with fatigue, the good horse could not pass the familiar place; he walked gravely into the stable-yard, and there fairly came to an end; craned out his drooping head, crooked his limbs, and seemed of wood. And no wonder—he was ninety-three miles from his last corn.

Paul Carrick, a young farrier who frequented the "Packhorse," happened just then to be lounging at the kitchen door, and saw him come in. He turned directly, and shouted into the house, "Ho! Master Vint, come hither. Here's Black Dick come home, and brought you a worshipful customer."

The landlord bustled out of the kitchen, crying, "They are welcome both." Then he came lowly louting to Griffith, cap in hand, and held the horse, poor immovable brute; and his wife courtied perseveringly at the door.

Griffith dismounted, and stood there looking like one in a dream.

"Please you come in, sir," said the landlady, smiling professionally.

He followed her mechanically.

"Would your worship be private? We keep a parlor for gentles."

"Ay, let me be alone," he groaned.

Mercy Vint, the daughter, happened to be on the stairs and heard him; the voice startled her, and she turned round directly to look at the speaker; but she only saw his back going into

the room, and then he flung himself like a sack into the arm-chair.

The landlady invited him to order supper; he declined. She pressed him. He flung a piece of money on the table, and told her savagely to score his supper, and leave him in peace.

She flounced out with a red face, and complained to her husband in the kitchen.

Harry Vint rung the crown piece on the table before he committed himself to a reply. It rang like a bell. "Churl or not, his coin is good," said Harry Vint, philosophically. "I'll eat his supper, dame, for that matter."

"Father," whispered Mercy, "I do think the gentleman is in trouble."

"And that is no business of mine, neither," said Harry Vint.

Presently the guest they were discussing called loudly for a quart of burnt wine.

When it was ready, Mercy offered to take it in to him. She was curious. The landlord looked up rather surprised, for his daughter attended to the farm, but fought shy of the inn and its business.

"Take it, lass, and welcome for me," said Mrs. Vint, pettishly.

Mercy took the wine in, and found Griffith with his head buried in his hands.

She stood a while with the tray, not knowing what to do.

Then, as he did not move, she said, softly, "The wine, sir, an if it please you."

Griffith lifted his head, and turned two eyes clouded with suffering upon her; he saw a buxom, blooming young woman, with remarkably dove-like eyes, that dwelt with timid, kindly curiosity upon him. He looked at her in a half distracted way, and then put his hand to the mug. "Here's perdition to all false women!" said he, and tossed half the wine down at a single draught.

"'Tis not to me you drink, sir," said Mercy, with gentle dignity. Then she courtesied modestly and retired, discouraged, not offended.

The wretched Griffith took no notice—did not even see he had repulsed a friendly visitor. The wine, taken on an empty stomach, soon stupefied him, and he staggered to bed.

He awoke at daybreak; and oh! the agony of that waking.

He lay sighing a while, with his hot skin quivering on his bones, and his heart like lead; then got up and flung his clothes on hastily, and asked how far to the nearest sea-port.

Twenty miles.

He called for his horse. The poor brute was dead lame.

He cursed that good servant for going lame. He walked round and round like a wild beast, chafing and fuming a while, then sank into a torpor of dejection, and sat with his head bowed on the table all day.

He ate scarcely any food, but drank wine freely, remarking, however, that it was false-hearted stuff; did him no good; and had no taste as wine used to have. "But nothing is what it was," said he. "Even I was happy once. But that seems years ago."

"Alas! poor gentleman; God comfort you," said Mercy Vint, and came with the tears in her dove-like eyes, and said to her father, "To be sure his worship hath been crossed in love; and

what could she be thinking of? Such a handsome, well-made gentleman!"

"Now that is a wench's first thought," said Harry Vint: "more likely lost his money gambling or racing. But, indeed, I think 'tis his head is disordered, not his heart. I wish the 'Packhorse' was quit of him, maugre his laced coat. We want no kill-joys here."

That night he was heard groaning and talking, and did not come down at all.

So at noon Mrs. Vint knocked at his door: a weak voice bade her enter; she found him shivering, and he asked her for a fire.

She grumbled, out of hearing, but lighted a fire.

Presently his voice was heard hallooing: he wanted all the windows open, he was so burning hot.

The landlady looked at him, and saw his face was flushed and swollen, and he complained of pain in all his bones. She opened the windows, and asked him would he have a doctor sent for: he shook his head contemptuously.

However, toward evening he became delirious, and raved and tossed, and rolled his head as if it was an intolerable weight he wanted to get rid of.

The females of the family were for sending at once for a doctor, but the prudent Harry demurred.

"Tell me first who is to pay the fee," said he. "I've seen a fine coat with the pockets empty before to-day."

The women set up their throats at him with one accord, each after her kind.

"Out, fie!" said Mercy; "are we to do naught for charity?"

"Why, there's his horse, ye foolish man," said Mrs. Vint.

"Ay, ye are both wiser than me," said Harry Vint, ironically. And soon after that he went out softly.

The next minute he was in the sick man's room, examining his pockets. To his infinite surprise, he found twenty gold pieces, a quantity of silver, and some trinkets.

He spread them all out on the table and gloat-ed on them with greedy eyes. They looked so inviting that he said to himself they would be safer in his custody than in that of a delirious person, who was even now raving incoherently before him, and could not see what he was doing. He therefore proceeded to transfer them to his own care.

On the way to his pocket, his shaking hand was arrested by another hand, soft, but firm as iron. He shuddered, and looked round in abject terror; and there was his daughter's face, pale as his own, but full of resolution. "Nay, father," said she, "I must take charge of these, and well do you know why."

These simple words cowed Harry Vint, so that he instantly resigned the money and jewels, and retired, muttering that "things were come to a pretty pass"—"a man was no longer master in his own house," etc., etc., etc.

While he inveighed against the degeneracy of the age, the women paid no more attention than the age did, but just sent for the doctor. He came, and bled the patient. This gave him a momentary relief; but when, in the natural progress of the disease, sweating and weakness came on, the loss of the precious vital fluid was fatal,

and the patient's pulse became scarce perceptible. There he lay, with wet hair, and gleaming eyes, and haggard face, at death's door.

An experienced old crone was got to nurse him, and she told Mrs. Vint he would live maybe three days.

Paul Carrick used to come to the "Packhorse" to see Mercy Vint, and, finding her sad, asked her what was the matter.

"What should it be," said she, "but the poor gentleman a-dying overhead, away from all his friends."

"Let me see him," said Paul.

Mercy took him softly into the room.

"Ay, he is booked," said the farrier. "Doctor has taken too much blood out of the man's body. They kill a many that way."

"Alack, Paul! must he die? Can naught be done?" said Mercy, clasping her hands.

"I don't say that, neither," said the farrier. "He is a well-made man—he is young. I might save him, perhaps, if I had not so many beasts to look to. I'll tell you what you do. Make him soup as strong as strong; have him watched night and day, and let 'em put a spoonful of warm wine into him every hour, and then of soup; egg flip is a good thing too; change his bed-linen, and keep the doctors from him; that is his only chance: he is fairly dying of weakness. But I must be off. Farmer Blake's cow is down for calving; I must give her an ounce of salts before 'tis too late."

Mercy Vint scanned the patient closely, and saw that Paul Carrick was right. She followed his instructions to the letter, with one exception. Instead of trusting to the old woman, of whom she had no very good opinion, she had the great arm-chair brought into the sick-room, and watched the patient herself by night and day. A gentle hand cooled his temples; a gentle hand brought concentrated nourishment to his lips; and a mellow voice coaxed him to be good and swallow it. There are voices it is not natural to resist, and Griffith learned by degrees to obey this one, even when he was half unconscious.

At the end of three days this zealous young nurse thought she discerned a slight improvement, and told her mother so. Then the old lady came and examined the patient, and shook her head gravely. Her judgment, like her daughter's, was influenced by her wishes.

The fact is, both landlord and landlady were now calculating upon Griffith's decease. Harry had told her about the money and jewels, and the pair had put their heads together, and settled that Griffith was a gentleman highwayman, and his spoil would never be reclaimed after his decease, but fall to those good Samaritans who were now nursing him, and intended to bury him respectably. The future being thus settled, this worthy couple became a little impatient; for Griffith, like Charles the Second, was "an unconscionable time dying."

We order dinner to hasten a lingering guest, and, with equal force of logic, mine host of the "Packhorse" spoke to White, the village carpenter, about a full-sized coffin, and his wife set the old crone to make a linen shroud, unobtrusively, in the bake-house.

On the third afternoon of her nursing Mercy left her patient, and called up the crone to tend

him. She herself, worn out with fatigue, threw herself on a bed in her mother's room hard by, and soon fell asleep.

She had slept about two hours when she was awakened by a strange noise in the sick-chamber—a man and a woman quarreling.

She bounded off the bed, and was in the room directly.

Lo and behold, there were the nurse and the dying man abusing one another like pick-pockets.

The cause of this little misunderstanding was not far to seek. The old crone had brought up her work, videlicet a winding-sheet all but finished, and certain strips of glazed muslin about three inches deep. She soon completed the winding-sheet, and hung it over two chairs in the patient's sight; she then proceeded to double the slips in six, and nick them; then she unrolled them, and they were frills, and well adapted to make the coming corpse absurd, and divest it of any little dignity the King of Terrors might bestow on it.

She was so intent upon her congenial task that she did not observe the sick man had awakened, and was viewing her and her work with an intelligent but sinister eye.

"What is that you are making?" said he, grimly.

The voice was rather clear and strong, and seemed so loud and strange in that still chamber that it startled the woman mightily. She uttered a little shriek, and then was wroth. "Plague take the man!" said she; "how you scared me. Keep quiet, do, and mind your own business." [The business of going off the hooks.]

"I ask you what is that you are making," said Griffith, louder, and raising himself on his arm.

"Baby's frills," replied the woman, coolly, recovering that contempt for the understandings of the dying which marks the veritable crone.

"Ye lie!" said Griffith. "And there is a shroud. Who is that for?"

"Who should it be for, thou simple body? Keep quiet, do, till the change comes. 'Twon't be long now; art too well to last till sundown."

"So 'tis for me, is it?" screamed Griffith. "I'll disappoint ye yet. Give me my clothes. I'll not lie here to be measured for my grave, ye old witch."

"Here's manners!" cackled the indignant crone. "Ye foul-mouthed knave, is this how you thank a decent woman for making a comfortable corpse of ye, you that has no right to die in your shoes, let a be such dainties as muslin neck-ruff, and shroud of good Dutch flax?"

At this Griffith discharged a volley, in which "vulture," "hag," "blood-sucker," etc., blended with as many oaths, during which Mercy came in.

She glided to him with her dove's eyes full of concern, and laid her hand gently on his shoulder. "You'll work yourself a mischief," said she; "leave me to scold her. Why, my good Nelly, how could you be so hare-brained? Prithee take all that trumpety away this minute; none here needeth it, nor shall not this many a year, please God."

"They want me dead," said Griffith to her, piteously, finding he had got one friend, and sunk back on his pillow exhausted.

"So it seems," said Mercy, cunningly. "But

I'd balk them finely. I'd up and order a beef-steak this minute."

"And shall," said Griffith, with feeble spite. "Leastways do you order it, and I'll eat it—d—n her!"

Sick men are like children, and women soon find that out, and manage them accordingly. In ten minutes Mercy brought a good rump-steak to the bedside, and said, "Now for't. Marry come up, with her winding-sheets!"

Thus played upon and encouraged, the great baby ate more than half the steak, and soon after perspired gently and fell asleep.

Paul Carrick found him breathing gently, with a slight tint of red in his cheek, and told Mercy there was a change for the better. "We have brought him to a true intermission," said he, "so throw in the bark at once."

"What, drench his honor's worship!" said Mercy, innocently. "Nay, send thou the medicine, and I'll find womanly ways to get it down him."

Next day came the doctor, and whispered softly to Mrs. Vint, "How are we all up stairs?"

"Why couldn't you come afore?" replied Mrs. Vint, crossly. "Here's farrier Carrick stepped in, and curing him out of hand—the meddlesome body."

"A farrier rob me of my patient!" cried the doctor, in high dudgeon.

"Nay, good sir, 'tis no fault of mine. This Paul is a sort of a kind of a follower of our Mercy's, and she is mistress here, I trow."

"And what hath his farriership prescribed? Friar's balsam, belike."

"Nay, I know not; but you may soon learn, for he is above, physicking the gentleman (a pretty gentleman!), and suiting to our Mercy—after a manner."

The doctor declined to make one in so mixed a consultation.

"Give me my fee, dame," said he; "and as for this impertinent farrier, the patient's blood be on his head; and I'd have him beware the law."

Mrs. Vint went to the stair-foot, and screamed, "Mercy, the good doctor wants his fee. Who is to pay it, I wonder?"

"I'll bring it him anon," said a gentle voice; and Mercy soon came down and paid it with a willing air that half disarmed professional fury.

"'Tis a good lass, dame," said the doctor, when she was gone; "and, by the same token, I wish her better mated than to a scrub of a farrier."

Griffith, still weak, but freed of fever, woke one glorious afternoon, and heard a bird-like voice humming a quaint old ditty, and saw a field of golden wheat through an open window, and seated at that window the mellow songstress, Mercy Vint, plying her needle, with lowered lashes but beaming face, a picture of health and quiet womanly happiness. Things were going to her mind in that sick-room.

He looked at her, and at the golden corn and summer haze beyond, and the tide of life seemed to rush back upon him.

"My good lass," said he, "tell me where am I, for I know not."

Mercy started and left off singing, then rose and came slowly toward him, with her work in her hand.

Innocent joy at this new symptom of convalescence flushed her comely features, but she spoke low.

"Good sir, at the 'Packhorse,'" said she, smiling.

"The 'Packhorse,' and where is that?"

"Hard by Allerton village."

"And where is that—not in Cumberland?"

"Nay, in Lancashire, your worship. Why, whence come you, that know not the 'Packhorse,' nor yet Allerton township? Come you from Cumberland?"

"No matter whence I come. I'm going on board ship, like my father before me."

"Alas! sir, you are not fit; you have been very ill, and partly distraught."

She stopped, for Griffith turned his face to the wall with a deep groan. It had all rushed over him in a moment.

Mercy stood still and worked on, but the water gathered in her eyes at that eloquent groan.

By-and-by Griffith turned round again, with a face of anguish, and filmy eyes, and saw her in the same place standing, working, and pitying.

"What, are *you* there still?" said he, roughly.

"Ay, sir; but I'll go sooner than be troublesome. Can I fetch you any thing?"

"No. Ay, wine; bring me wine to drown it all."

She brought him a pint of wine.

"Pledge me," said he, with a miserable attempt at a smile.

She put the cup to her lips and sipped a drop or two, but her dove's eyes were looking up at him over the liquor all the time. Griffith soon disposed of the rest, and asked for more.

"Nay," said she, "but I dare not; the doctor hath forbidden excess in drinking."

"The doctor! what doctor?"

"Doctor Paul," said she, demurely. "He hath saved your life, sir, I do think."

"Plague take him for that!"

"So say not I."

Here she left him with an excuse. "'Tis milking time, sir, and you shall know that I am our dairy-maid. I seldom trouble the inn."

Next day she was on the window-seat working and beaming. The patient called to her in peevish accents to put his head higher. She laid down her work with a smile, and came and raised his head.

"There, now, that is too high," said he; "how awkward you are!"

"I lack experience, sir, but not good will. There, now, is that a little better?"

"Ay, a little. I'm sick of lying here; I want to get up. Dost hear what I say? I—want—to get up."

"And so you shall, as soon as ever you are fit. To-morrow, perhaps. To-day you must e'en be patient. Patience is a rare medicine."

Tic, tic, tic! "What a noise they are making down stairs. Go, lass, and bid them hold their peace."

Mercy shook her head. "Good lack-a-day! we might as well bid the river give over running; but, to be sure, this comes of keeping a hostelry, sir. When we had only the farm, we were quiet, and did no ill to no one."

"Well, sing me, to drown their eternal buzzing; it worries me dead."

"Me sing! Alack, sir, I'm no songster."

"That is false. You sing like a thrush. I dote on music; and, when I was delirious, I heard one singing about my bed; I thought it was an angel at that time, but 'twas only you, my young mistress; and, now I ask you, you say me nay. That is the way with you all. Plague take the girl, and all her cursed, unreasonable, hypocritical sex. I warrant me you'd sing if I wanted to sleep, and dance the devil to a standstill."

Mercy, instead of flouncing out of the room, stood looking on him with maternal eyes, and chuckling like a bird.

"That is right, sir; tax us all to your heart's content. Oh, but I'm a joyful woman to hear you, for 'tis a sure sign of mending when the sick take to rating of their nurses."

"In sooth, I am too cross-grained," said Griffith, relenting.

"Not a whit, sir, for my taste. I've been in care for you, and now you are a little cross, that maketh me easy."

"Thou art a good soul. Wilt sing me a stave after all?"

"La you now, how you come back to that! Ay, and with a good heart; for, to be sure, 'tis a sin to gainsay a sick man. But, indeed, I am the homeliest singer. Methinks 'tis time I went down and bade them cook your worship's supper."

"Nay, I'll not eat nor sup till I hear thee sing."

"Your will is my law, sir," said Mercy, dryly, and retired to the window-seat; that was the first obvious preliminary. Then she fiddled with her apron, and hemmed, and waited in hopes a reprieve might come; but a peevish, relentless voice demanded the song at intervals.

So then she turned her head carefully away from her hearer, lowered her eyes, and, looking the picture of guilt and shame all the time, sang an ancient ditty. The poltroon's voice was rich, mellow, clear, and sweet as honey, and she sang the notes for the sake of the words, not the words for the sake of the notes, as all but Nature's singers do.

The air was grave as well as sweet; for Mercy was of an old Puritan stock, and even her songs were not giddy-paced, but solid, quaint, and tender: all the more did they reach the soul.

In vain was the blushing cheek averted, and the honeyed lips: the ravishing tones set the birds chirping outside, yet filled the room within, and the glasses rang in harmony upon the shelf as the sweet singer poured out from her heart (so it seemed) the speaking song that begins thus:

"In vain you tell your parting lover
You wish fair winds may waft him over.
Alas! what winds can happy prove
That bear me far from her I love?
Alas! what dangers on the main
Can equal those that I sustain
From slighted love and cold disdain."

Griffith beat time with his hand a while, and his own face softened and beautified as the melody curled about his heart. But soon it was too much for him; he knew the song—had sung it to Kate Peyton in their days of courtship. A thousand memories gushed in upon his soul and overpowered him. He burst out sobbing violently, and wept as if his heart must break.

"Alas! what have I done?" said Mercy; and the tears ran swiftly from her eyes at the sight. Then, with native delicacy, she hurried from the room.

What Griffith went through that night in silence was never known but to himself. But the next morning he was a changed man. He was all dogged resolution; put on his clothes unaided, though he could hardly stand to do it; and borrowed the landlord's staff, and crawled out a smart distance into the sun. "It was kill or cure," said he. "I am to live, it seems. Well, then, the past is dead. My life begins again to-day."

Hen-like Mercy soon learned this sally of her refractory duckling, and was uneasy. So, for an excuse to watch him, she brought him out his money and jewels, and told him she had thought it safest to take charge of them.

He thanked her cavalierly, and offered her a diamond ring.

She blushed scarlet and declined it, and even turned a meekly reproachful glance on him with her dove's eyes.

He had a suit of russet made, and put away his fine coat, and forbade any one to call him "Your worship." "I am a farmer like yourselves," said he, "and my name is—Thomas Leicester."

A brain fever either kills the unhappy lover, or else benumbs the very anguish that caused it.

And so it was with Griffith. His love got benumbed, and the sense of his wrongs vivid. He nursed a bitter hatred of his wife; only, as he could not punish her without going near her, and no punishment short of death seemed enough for her, he set to work to obliterate her from his very memory, if possible. He tried employment. He potted about the little farm, advising and helping, and that so zealously that the landlord retired altogether from that department, and Griffith, instead of he, became Mercy's ally, agricultural and bucolical. She was a shepherdess to the core, and hated the poor "Packhorse."

For all that, it was her fate to add to its attractions; for Griffith bought a viol de gambo, and taught her sweet songs, which he accompanied with such skill, and sometimes with his voice, that good company often looked in on the chance of a good song sweetly sung and played.

The sick in body or mind are egotistical. Griffith was no exception. Bent on curing his own deep wound, he never troubled his head about the wound he might inflict.

He was grateful to his sweet nurse, and told her so; and his gratitude charmed her all the more that it had been rather long in coming.

He found this dove-like creature a wonderful soother: he applied her more and more to his sore heart.

As for Mercy, she had been too good and kind to her patient not to take a tender interest in his convalescence. Our hearts warm more to those we have been kind to than to those who have been kind to us; and the female reader can easily imagine what delicious feelings stole into that womanly heart when she saw her pale nursing pick up health and strength under her wing, and become the finest, handsomest man in the parish.

Pity and admiration; where these meet, love is not far behind.

And then this man, who had been cross and rough while he was weak, became gentler, kinder, and more deferential to her the stronger he got.

Mrs. Vint saw they were both fond of each other's company, and disapproved it. She told Paul Carrick if he had any thought of Mercy he had better give over shilly-shallying, for there was another man after her. Paul made light of it at first. "She has known me too long to take up her head with a new-comer," said he. "To be sure I never asked her to name the day, but she knows my mind well enough, and I know hers."

"Then you know more than I do," said the mother, ironically.

He thought over this conversation, and very wisely determined not to run unnecessary risks. He came up one afternoon, and hunted about for Mercy till he found her milking a cow in the adjoining paddock.

"Well, lass," said he, "I've good news for thee. My old dad says we may have his house to live in, so now you and I can yoke next month, if ye will."

"Me turn the honest man out of his house!" said Mercy, mighty innocently.

"Who asks you? He nobbut bargains for the chimney corner, and you are not the girl to begrudge the old man that."

"Oh no, Paul. But what would father do if I were to leave *his* house? Methinks the farm would go to rack and ruin, he is so wrapped up in his nasty piece."

"Why, he has got a helper, by all accounts; and, if you talk like that, you will never wed at all."

"Never is a big word. But I am too young to marry yet. Jenny, thou jade, stand still."

The attack and defense proceeded upon these terms for some time, and the defendant had one base advantage, and used it. Her forehead was wedged tight against Jenny's ribs, and Paul could not see her face. This, and the feminine evasiveness of her replies, irritated him at last.

"Take thy head out o' the coow," said he, roughly, "and answer straight. Is all our wooing to go for naught?"

"Wooing? You never said so much to me in all these years as you have to-day."

"Oh, ye knew my mind well enough. There's a many ways of showing the heart."

"Speaking out is the best, I trow."

"Why, what do I come here for twice a week, this two years past, if not for thee?"

"Ay, for me and father's ale."

"And thou canst look at me and tell me that? Ye false, hard-hearted hussy. But nay, thou wast never so; 'tis this Thomas Leicester hath bewitched thee, and set thee against thy true lover."

"Mr. Leicester pays no suit to me," said Mercy, blushing: "he is a right civil-spoken gentleman, and you know you saved his life."

"The more fool I. I wish I had known he was going to rob me of my lass's heart, I'd have seen him die a hundred times ere I'd have interfered. But they say if you save a man's life he'll make you rue it. Mercy, my lass, you are well respected in the parish; take a thought

now: better be a farrier's wife than a gentleman's mistress."

Mercy did take her head "out of the cow" at this, and for once her cheek burned with anger; but the unwonted sentiment died before it could find words, and she said quietly, "I need not be either, against my will."

Young Carrick made many such appeals to Mercy Vint, but he could never bring her to confess to him that he and she had ever been more than friends, or were now any thing less than friends. Still he forced her to own to herself that, if she had never seen Thomas Leicester, her quiet affection and respect for Carrick would probably have carried her to the altar with him.

His remonstrances, sometimes angry, sometimes tearful, awoke her pity, which was the grand sentiment of her heart, and disturbed her peace.

Moreover, she studied the two men in her quiet, thoughtful way, and saw that Carrick loved her with all his honest, though hitherto tepid heart; but Griffith had depths, and could love with more passion than ever he had shown for her. "He is not the man to have a fever by reason of me," said the poor girl to herself. But I am afraid even this attracted her to Griffith; it nettled a woman's soft ambition, which is, to be as well loved as ever woman was.

And so things went on, and, as generally happens, the man who was losing ground went the very way to lose more. He spoke ill of Griffith behind his back; called him a highwayman, a gentleman, an ungrateful, undermining traitor. But Griffith never mentioned Carrick; and so, when he and Mercy were together, her old follower was pleasingly obliterated, and affectionate good-humor reigned. Thus Griffith, alias Thomas, became her sunbeam, and Paul her cloud.

But he who had disturbed the peace of others, his own turn came.

One day he found Mercy crying. He sat down beside her, and said kindly, "Why, sweetheart, what is amiss?"

"No great matter," said she, and turned her head away, but did not check her tears, for it was new and pleasant to be consoled by Thomas Leicester."

"Nay, but tell me, child."

"Well, then, Jessie Carrick has been at me—that is all."

"The vixen! what did she say?"

"Nay, I'm not pleased enow with it to repeat it. She did cast something in my teeth."

Griffith pressed her to be more explicit. She declined with so many blushes that his curiosity was awakened, and he told Mrs. Vint, with some heat, that Jess Carrick had been making Mercy cry.

"Like enow," said Mrs. Vint, coolly. "She'll eat her virtuals all one for that, please God."

"Else I'll ring the cock-nosed jade's neck next time she comes here," replied Griffith; "but, dame, I want to know what she can have to say to Mercy to make her cry."

Mrs. Vint looked him steadily in the face for some time, and then and there decided to come to an explanation. "Ten to one 'tis about her brother," said she; "you know this Paul is our Mercy's sweetheart."

At these simple words Griffith winced, and his countenance changed remarkably. Mrs. Vint observed it, and was all the more resolved to have it out with him.

"Her sweetheart!" said Griffith. "Why, I have seen them together a dozen of times, and not a word of courtship."

"Oh, the young men don't make many speeches in these parts. They show their hearts by act."

"By act? Why, I met them coming home from milking t'other evening. Mercy was carrying the pail, brimful, and that oaf sauntered by her side, with his hands in his pockets; was that the act of a lover?"

"I heard of it, sir," said Mrs. Vint, quietly; "and as how you took the pail from her, willy nilly, and carried it home. Mercy was vexed about it. She told me you panted at the door, and she was a deal fitter to carry the pail than you, that is just off a sick-bed, like. But lawk, sir, ye can't go by the likes of that: the bachelors here they'd see their sweethearts carry the roof into next parish on their backs, like a snail, and never put out a hand; 'tis not the custom hereaway. But, as I was saying, Paul and our Mercy kept company after a manner: he never had the wit to flatter her as should be, nor the stomach to bid her name the day, and he'd buy the ring; but he talked to her about his sick beasts more than he did to any other girl in the parish, and she'd have ended by going to church with him, only you came and put a coolness between 'em."

"I! How?"

"Well, sir, our Mercy is a kind-hearted lass, though I say it, and you were sick, and she did nurse you; and that was a beginning. And, to be sure, you are a fine, personable man, and capital company; and you are always about the girl; and bethink you, sir, she is flesh and blood like her neighbors; and they say, once a body has tasted venison steak, it spoils their stomach for oat porridge. Now that is Mercy's case, I'm thinking; not that she ever said as much to me; she is too reserved. But, bless your heart, I'm forced to go about with eyes in my head, and watch 'em all a bit, me that keeps an inn."

Griffith groaned. "I'm a villain!" said he.

"Nay, nay," said Mrs. Vint. "Gentlefolks must be amused, cost what it may; but, hoping no offense, sir, the girl was a good friend to you in time of sickness, and so was this Paul, for that matter."

"She was," cried Griffith; "God bless her. How can I ever repay her?"

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Vint, "if that comes from your heart, you might take our Mercy apart, and tell her you like her very well, but not enough to marry a farmer's daughter—don't say an inn-keeper's daughter, or you'll be sure to offend her; she is bitter against the 'Packhorse.' Says you, 'This Paul is an honest lad; turn your heart back to him.' And with that, mount your black horse and ride away, and God speed you, sir; we shall often talk of you at the 'Packhorse,' and naught but good."

Griffith gave the woman his hand, and his breast labored heavily.

Jealousy was ingrained in the man. Mrs. Vint had pricked his conscience, but she had wounded his foible.

He was not in love with Mercy, but he es-

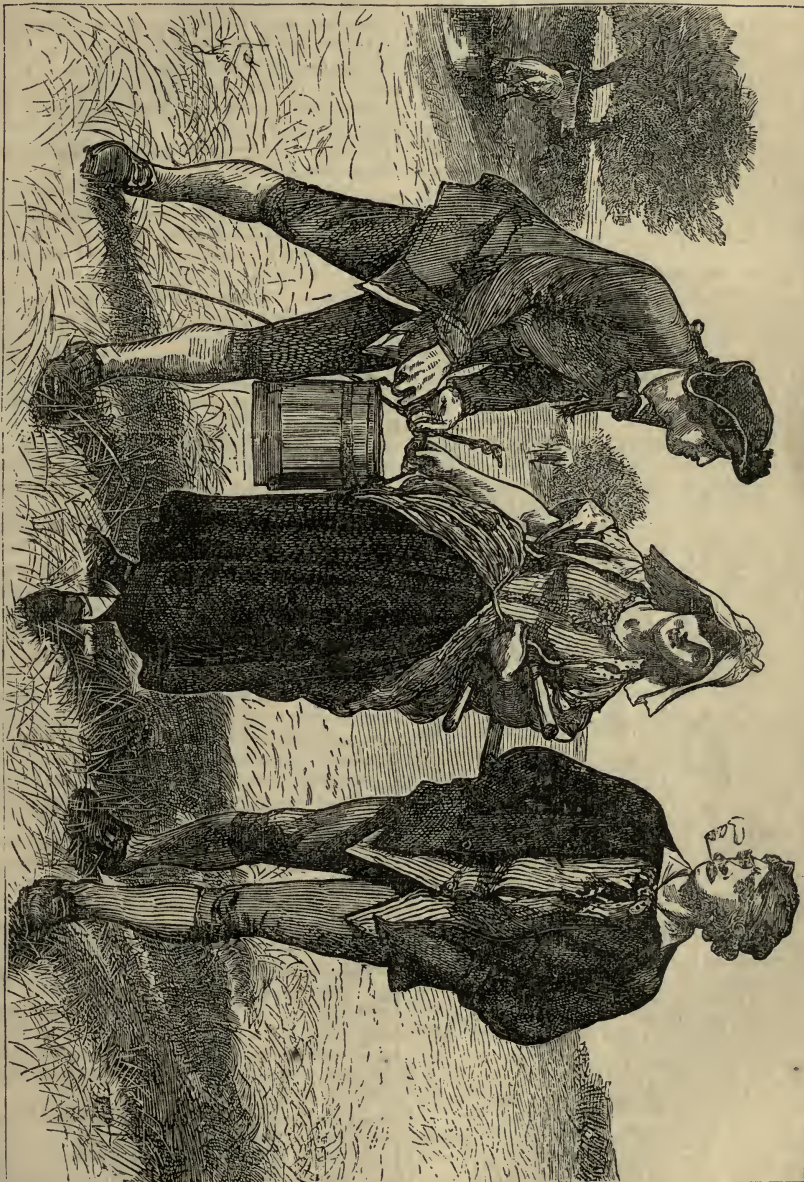
teemed her, and liked her, and saw her value, and, above all, could not bear another man should have her.

Now this gave the matter a new turn. Mrs. Vint had overcome her dislike to him long ago; still, he was not her favorite. But his giving her his hand with a gentle pressure, and his

write, and cast accounts; good at her sampler, and can churn and make cheeses, and play of the viol, and lead the psalm in church, and dance a minuet, she can, with any lady in the land. As to her nursing in time of sickness, that I leave to you, sir."

"She is an angel," cried Griffith, "and my

"Mercy was carrying the pail, bringing, and that our sauntered by her side."



[Page 80.]

manifest agitation, rather won her; and, as uneducated women are your true weathercocks, she went about directly. "To be sure," said she, "our Mercy is too good for the likes of him; she is not like Harry and me; she has been well brought up by her Aunt Prudence, as was governess in a nobleman's house. She can read and

benefactress: no man living is good enough for her." And he went away, visibly discomposed.

Mrs. Vint repeated this conversation to Mercy, and told her Thomas Leicester was certainly in love with her. "Shouldst have seen his face, girl, when I told him Paul and you were sweet-

hearts. 'Twas as if I had run a knife in his heart."

Mercy murmured a few words of doubt; but she kissed her mother eloquently, and went about rosy and beaming all that afternoon.

As for Griffith, his gratitude and his jealousy were now at war, and caused him a severe mental struggle.

Carrick, too, was spurred by jealousy, and came every day to the house, and besieged Mercy; and Griffith, who saw them together, and did not hear Mercy's replies, was excited, irritated, alarmed.

Mrs. Vint saw his agitation, and determined to bring matters to a climax. She was always giving him a side thrust; and at last she told him plainly that he was not behaving like a man. "If the girl is not good enough for you, why make a fool of her, and set her against a good husband?" And when he replied she was good enough for any man in England, "Then," said she, "why not show your respect for her as Paul Carrick does? He likes her well enough to go to church with her."

With the horns of this dilemma she so gored Kate Peyton's husband that, at last, she and Paul Carrick, between them, drove him out of his conscience.

So he watched his opportunity and got Mercy alone. He took her hand, and told her he loved her, and that she was his only comfort in the world, and he found he could not live without her.

At this she blushed and trembled a little, and leaned her brow upon his shoulder, and was a happy creature for a few moments.

So far, fluently enough; but then he began to falter and stammer, and say that for certain reasons he could not marry at all. But if she could be content with any thing short of that, he would retire with her into a distant country, and there, where nobody could contradict him, would call her his wife, and treat her as his wife, and pay his debt of gratitude to her by a life of devotion.

As he spoke her brow retired an inch or two from his shoulder; but she heard him quietly out, and then drew back and confronted him, pale, but to all appearance calm.

"Call things by their right names," said she. "What you offer me this day, in my father's house, is to be your mistress. Then—God forgive you, Thomas Leicester."

With this oblique and feminine reply, and one look of unfathomable reproach from her soft eyes, she turned her back on him; but, remembering her manners, courtesied at the door, and so retired; and unpretending Virtue lent her such true dignity that he was struck dumb, and made no attempt to detain her.

I think her dignified composure did not last long when she was alone; at least, the next time he saw her, her eyes were red; his heart smote him, and he began to make excuses and beg her forgiveness. But she interrupted him. "Don't speak to me no more, if you please, sir," said she, civilly, but coldly.

Mercy, though so quiet and inoffensive, had depth and strength of character. She never told her mother what Thomas Leicester had proposed to her. Her honest pride kept her silent, for one thing. She would not have it known she had been insulted. And, besides that, she loved Thomas Leicester still, and could not expose or

hurt him. Once there was an Israelite without guile, though you and I never saw him; and once there was a Saxon without bile, and her name was Mercy Vint. In this heart of gold the affections were stronger than the passions. She was deeply wounded, and showed it in a patient way to him who had wounded her, but to none other. Her conduct to him in public and private was truly singular, and would alone have stamped her a remarkable character. She declined all communication with him in private, and avoided him steadily and adroitly; but in public she spoke to him, sang with him when she was asked, and treated him much the same as before. He could see a subtle difference, but nobody else could.

This generosity, coupled with all she had done for him before, penetrated his heart, and filled him with admiration and remorse. He yielded to Mrs. Vint's suggestions, and told her she was right; he would tear himself away, and never see the dear "Packhorse" again. "But oh, dame," said he, "'tis a sorrowful thing to be alone in the world again, and naught to do. If I had but a farm, and a sweet little inn like this, perchance my heart would not be quite so heavy as 'tis this day at thoughts of parting from thee and thine."

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Vint, "if that is all, there is the 'Vine' to let at this moment. 'Tis a better place of business than this; and some meadows go with it, and land to be had in the parish."

"I'll ride and see it," said Griffith, eagerly: then, dejectedly, "but, alas! I have no heart to keep an inn without somebody to help me, and say a kind word now and then. Ah! Mercy Vint, thou hast spoiled me for living alone."

This vacillation exhausted Mrs. Vint's patience. "What are ye sighing about, ye foolish man?" said she, contemptuously; "you have got it all your own way: if 'tis a wife ye want, ask Mercy, and don't take a nay; if ye would have a housekeeper, you need not want one long. I'll be bound there's plenty of young women where you came from as would be glad to keep the 'Vine' under you. And, if you come to that, our Mercy is a treasure on the farm, but she is no help in the inn, no more than a wax figure: she never brought us a shilling till you came and made her sing to your base viol. Nay, what you want is a smart, handsome girl, with a quick eye and a ready tongue, and one as can look a man in the face, and not given to love nor liquor. Don't you know never such a one?"

"Not I. Humph, to be sure, there is Caroline Ryder. She is handsome, and hath a good wit. She is a lady's maid."

"That's your woman, if she'll come. And to be sure she will; for to be mistress of an inn, that's a lady's maid's Paradise."

"She would have come a few months ago, and gladly; I'll write to her."

"Better talk to her, and persuade her."

"I'll do that too; but I must write to her first."

"So do, then; but, whatever you do, don't shilly-shally no longer. If wrestling was shilly-shallying, methinks you'd bear the bell, you or else Paul Carrick. Why, all this trouble comes on't. He might have wed our Mercy a year ago for the asking. Shilly-shally belongs to us that be women. 'Tis despisable in a man."

Thus driven on all sides, Griffith rode and inspected the "Vine" (it was only seven miles off), and after the usual chaffering, came to terms with the proprietor.

He fixed the day for his departure, and told Mrs. Vint he must ride into Cumberland first to get some money, and also to see about a housekeeper.

He made no secret of all this; and, indeed, was not without hopes Mercy would relent, or perhaps be jealous of this housekeeper. But the only visible effect was to make her look pale and sad: she avoided him in private as before.

Harry Vint was loud in his regrets, and Carrick openly exultant. Griffith wrote to Caroline Ryder, and addressed the letter in a feigned hand, and took it himself to the nearest post town.

The letter came to hand, and will appear in that sequence of events on which I am now about to enter.

CHAPTER XXVII.

If Griffith Gaunt suffered anguish, he inflicted agony. Mrs. Gaunt was a high-spirited, proud, and sensitive woman; and he crushed her with foul words. Leonard was a delicate, vain, and sensitive man, accustomed to veneration. Imagine such a man hurled to the ground and trampled upon.

Griffith should not have fled; he should have staid and enjoyed his vengeance on these two persons. It might have cooled him a little had he stopped and seen the immediate consequences of his savage act.

The priest rose from the ground, pale as ashes, and trembling with fear and hate.

The lady was leaning, white as a sheet, against a tree, and holding it with her very nails for a little support.

They looked round at one another—a piteous glance of anguish and horror; then Mrs. Gaunt turned and flung her arm round so that the palm of her hand, high raised, confronted Leonard. I am thus particular, because it was a gesture grand and terrible as the occasion that called it forth—a gesture that *spoke*, and said, "Put the whole earth and sea between us forever after this."

The next moment she bent her head and rushed away, cowering and wringing her hands. She made for her house as naturally as a scared animal for its lair; but, ere she could reach it, she tottered under the shame, the distress, and the mere terror, and fell fainting with her fair forehead on the grass.

Caroline Ryder was crouched in the doorway, and did not see her come out of the grove, but only heard a rustle, and then saw her proud mistress totter forward and lie white, senseless, helpless at her very feet.

Ryder uttered a scream, but did not lose her presence of mind. She instantly knelt over Mrs. Gaunt, and loosened her stays with quick and dexterous hand.

It was very like the hawk perched over and clawing the ringdove she has struck down.

But people with brains are never quite inhuman: a drop of lukewarm pity entered even Ryder's heart as she assisted her victim. She called no one to help her, for she saw something very serious had happened, and she felt sure Mrs.

Gaunt would say something imprudent in that dangerous period when the patient recovers consciousness, but has not all her wits about her. Now Ryder was equally determined to know her mistress's secrets, and not to share the knowledge with any other person.

It was a long swoon; and when Mrs. Gaunt came to, the first thing she saw was Ryder leaning over her, with a face of much curiosity and some concern.

In that moment of weakness, the poor lady who had been so roughly handled saw a woman close to her, and being a little kind to her; so what did she do but throw her arms round Ryder's neck, and burst out sobbing as if her heart would break.

Then that unprincipled woman shed a tear or two with her, half crocodile, half impulse.

Mrs. Gaunt not only cried on her servant's neck, she justified Ryder's forecast by speaking unguardedly: "I've been insulted—insulted—insulted!"

But, even while uttering these words, she was recovering her pride: so the first "insulted" seemed to come from a broken-hearted child, the second from an indignant lady, the third from a wounded queen.

No more words than this; but rose, with Ryder's assistance, and went, leaning on that faithful creature's shoulder, to her own bedroom. There she sank into a chair, and said, in a voice to melt a stone, "My child! Bring me my little Rose."

Ryder ran and fetched the little girl; and Mrs. Gaunt held out both arms to her, angelically, and clasped her so passionately and piteously to her bosom that Rose cried for fear, and never forgot the scene all her days; and Mrs. Ryder, who was secretly a mother, felt a genuine twinge of pity and remorse. Curiosity, however, was the dominant sentiment; she was impatient to get all these convulsions over, and learn what had actually passed between Mr. and Mrs. Gaunt.

She waited till her mistress appeared calmer, and then, in soft, caressing tones, asked her what had happened.

"Never ask me that question again," cried Mrs. Gaunt, wildly; then, with inexpressible dignity, "My good girl, you have done all you could for me; now you must leave me alone with my daughter, and my God, who knows the truth."

Ryder courtesied and retired, burning with baffled curiosity.

Toward dusk Thomas Leicester came into the kitchen, and brought her news with a vengeance. He told her and the other maids that the squire had gone raving mad and fled the country. "Oh, lasses," said he, "if you had seen the poor soul's face, a riding headlong through the fair all one as if it was a plowed field; 'twas white as your smocks; and his eyes glowering on t'other world. We shall ne'er see that face alive again."

And this was her doing.

It surprised and overpowered Ryder. She threw her apron over her head, and went off in hysterics, and betrayed her lawless attachment to every woman in the kitchen, she who was so clever at probing others.

This day of violent emotions was followed by a sullen and sorrowful gloom.

Mrs. Gaunt kept her bedroom and admitted nobody, till at last the servants consulted togeth-

er, and sent little Rose to knock at her door with a basin of chocolate, while they watched on the stairs.

"It's only me, mamma," said Rose.

"Come in, my precious," said a trembling voice, and so Rose got in with her chocolate.

The next day she was sent for early; and at noon Mrs. Gaunt and Rose came down stairs, but their appearance startled the whole household. The mother was dressed all in black, and so was her daughter, whom she led by the hand. Mrs. Gaunt's face was pale, and sad, and stern; a monument of deep suffering and high-strung resolution.

It soon transpired that Griffith had left his home for good, and friends called on Mrs. Gaunt to slake their curiosity under the mask of sympathy.

Not one of them was admitted. No false excuses were made. "My mistress sees no one for the present," was the reply.

Curiosity, thus baffled, took up the pen, but was met with a short unvarying formula: "There is an unhappy misunderstanding between my husband and me. But I shall neither accuse him behind his back nor justify myself."

Thus the proud lady carried herself before the world, but secretly she writhed. A wife abandoned is a woman insulted, and makes the wives that are not abandoned—cluck.

Ryder was dejected for a time, and, though not honestly penitent, suffered some remorse at the miserable issue of her intrigues. But her elastic nature soon shook it off, and she felt a certain satisfaction at having reduced Mrs. Gaunt to her own level. This disarmed her hostility. She watched her as keenly as ever, but out of pure curiosity.

One thing puzzled her strangely. Leonard did not visit the house, nor could she even detect any communication between the parties.

At last, one day, her mistress told her to put on her hat and go to Father Leonard.

Ryder's eyes sparkled, and she was soon equipped. Mrs. Gaunt put a parcel and a letter into her hands. Ryder no sooner got out of her sight than she proceeded to tamper with the letter. But, to her just indignation, she found it so ingeniously folded and sealed that she could not read a word.

The parcel, however, she easily undid, and it contained forty pounds in gold and small notes. "Oho! my lady," said Ryder.

She was received by Leonard with a tender emotion he in vain tried to conceal.

On reading the letter his features contracted sharply, and he seemed to suffer agony. He would not even open the parcel. "You will take that back," said he, bitterly.

"What, without a word?"

"Without a word. But I will write when I am able."

"Don't be long, sir," suggested Ryder. "I am sure my mistress is wearying for you. Consider, sir, she is all alone now."

"Not so much alone as I am," said the priest, "nor half so unfortunate."

And with this he leaned his head despairingly on his hand, and motioned to Ryder to leave him.

"Here's a couple of fools," said she to herself as she went home.

That very evening Thomas Leicester caught her alone, and asked her to marry him.

She stared at first, and then treated it as a jest. "You come at the wrong time, young man," said she. "Marriage is put out of countenance. No, no, I will never marry after what I have seen in this house."

Leicester would not take this for an answer, and pressed her hard.

"Thomas," said this plausible jade, "I like you very well, but I couldn't leave my mistress in her trouble. Time to talk of marrying when master comes here alive and well."

"Nay," said Leicester, "my only chance is while he is away; you care more for his little finger than for my whole body—that they all say."

"Who says?"

"Jane, and all the lasses."

"You simple man, they want you for themselves, that is why they belie me."

"Nay, nay, I saw how you carried on when I brought word he was gone. You let your heart out for once. Don't take me for a fool; I see how 'tis; but I'll face it, for I worship the ground you walk on. Take a thought, my lass. What good can come of your setting your heart on him? I'm young, I'm healthy, and not ugly enough to set the dogs a barking; I've got a good fancy; I love you dear; I'll cure you of that fancy, and make you as happy as the day is long. I'll try and make you as happy as you will make me, my beauty."

He was so in earnest, and so much in love, that Mrs. Ryder pitied him, and wished her husband was in Heaven.

"I am very sorry, Tom," said she, softly: "dear me, I did not think you cared so much for me as this. I must just tell you the truth. I have got one in my own country, and I've promised him. I don't care to break my word; and, if I did, he is such a man I am sure he would kill me for it. Indeed, he has told me as much more than once or twice."

"Killing is a game that two can play at."

"Ah! but 'tis an ugly game, and I'll have no hand in it. And—don't be angry with me, Tom—I've known him longest, and—I love him best."

By pertinacity and variety in lying, she hit the mark at last. Tom swallowed this figment whole.

"That is but reason," said he. "I take my answer, and I wish ye both many happy days together, and well spent."

With this he retired, and blubbered a good hour in an outhouse.

Tom avoided the castle, and fell into low spir-its. He told his mother all, and she advised him to change the air. "You have been too long in one place," said she; "I hate being too long in one place myself."

This fired Tom's gipsy blood, and he said he would travel to-morrow, if he could but scrape together money enough to fill a peddler's pack.

He applied for a loan in several quarters, but was denied in all.

At last the poor fellow summoned courage to lay his case before Mrs. Gaunt.

Ryder's influence procured him an interview. She took him into the drawing-room, and bade him wait there. By-and-by a pale lady, all in black, glided into the room.

He pulled his front hair, and began to stammer something or other.

She interrupted him. "Ryder has told me," said she, softly. "I am sorry for you, and I will do what you require. And, to be sure, we need no gamekeeper here now."

She then gave him some money, and said she would look him up a few trifles besides, to put in his pack.

Tom's mother helped him lay out his money to advantage, and one day he called at Hernshaw, pack and all, to bid farewell.

The servants all laid out something with him for luck; and Mrs. Gaunt sent for him, and gave him a gold thimble, and a pound of tea, and several yards of gold lace, slightly tarnished, and a Queen Anne's guinea.

He thanked her heartily. "Ay, dame," said he, "you had always an open hand, married or single. My heart is heavy at leaving you. But I miss the squire's kindly face too. Hernshaw is not what it used to be."

Mrs. Gaunt turned her head aside, and the man could see his words had made her cry.

"My good Thomas," said she, at last, "you are going to travel the country; you might fall in with him."

"I might," said Leicester, incredulously.

"God grant you may; and, if you ever should, think of your poor mistress, and give him—this." She put her finger in her bosom and drew out a bullet wrapped in silver paper. "You will never lose this," said she. "I value it more than gold or silver. Oh, if ever you *should* see him, think of me and my daughter, and just put it in his hand without a word."

As he went out of the room Ryder intercepted him, and said, "Mayhap you will fall in with our master; if ever you do, tell him he is under a mistake, and the sooner he comes home the better."

Tom Leicester departed, and for days and weeks nothing occurred to break the sorrowful monotony of the place.

But the mourner had written to her old friend and confessor Francis, and, after some delay, involuntary on his part, he came to see her.

They were often closeted together, and spoke so low that Ryder could not catch a word.

Francis also paid several visits to Leonard; and the final result of these visits was that the latter left England.

Francis remained at Hernshaw as long as he could, and it was Mrs. Gaunt's hourly prayer that Griffith might return while Francis was with her.

He did, at her earnest request, stay much longer than he had intended, but at length he was obliged to fix next Monday to return to his own place.

It was on Thursday he made this arrangement, but the very next day the postman brought a letter to the Castle, thus addressed:

"To Mistress Caroline Ryder,

"Living Servant with Griffith Gaunt, Esq.,

"at his house, called Hernshaw Castle,

"near Wigeonmoor,

"in the county of Cumberland.

"These with speed."

The address was in a feigned hand. Ryder opened it in the kitchen, and uttered a scream.

Instantly three female throats opened upon her with questions.

She looked them contemptuously in their faces, put the letter into her pocket, and soon after slipped away to her own room, and locked herself in while she read it. It ran thus:

"GOOD MISTRESS RYDER,—I am alive yet, by the blessing, though somewhat battered, being now risen from a fever, wherein I lost my wits for a time; and, on coming to myself, I found them making of my shroud, whereby you shall learn how near I was to death; and all this I owe to that false, perjured woman that was my wife, and is your mistress.

"Know that I have donned russet and doffed gentility, for I find a heavy heart's best cure is occupation. I have taken a wayside inn, and think of renting a small farm, which two things go well together. Now you are, of all those I know, most fitted to manage the inn, and I the farm. You were always my good friend; and, if you be so still, then I charge you most solemnly that you utter no word to any living soul about this letter, but meet me privately where we can talk fully of these matters, for I will not set foot in Hernshaw Castle. Moreover, she told me once 'twas hers, and so be it. On Friday I shall lie at Stapleton, and the next day, by an easy journey, to the place where I once was so happy.

"So then, at seven of the clock on Saturday evening, be the same wet or dry, prithee come to the gate of the Grove unbeknown, and speak to your faithful friend and most unhappy master,

"GRIFFITH GAUNT.

"Be secret as the grave. Would I were in it."

This letter set Caroline Ryder in a tumult. Griffith alive and well, and set against his wife, and coming to her for assistance!

After the first agitation she read it again, and weighed every syllable. There was one book she had studied more than most of us—the Heart, and she soon read Griffith's in this letter. It was no love-letter; he really-intended business; but, weak in health, and broken in spirit, and alone in the world, he naturally turned to one who had confessed an affection for him, and would therefore be true to his interests and study his happiness.

The proposal was every way satisfactory to Mrs. Ryder—to be mistress of an inn, and have servants under her instead of being one herself. And then, if Griffith and she began as allies in business, she felt very sure she could make herself, first necessary to him, and then dear to him.

She was so elated she could hardly contain herself; and all her fellow-servants remarked that Mrs. Ryder had heard good news.

Saturday came, and never did hours seem to creep so slowly.

But at last the sun set, and the stars came out; there was no moon. Ryder opened the window and looked out; it was an admirable night for an assignation.

She washed her face again, put on her gray silk gown and purple petticoat—*Mrs. Gaunt* had given them to her—and, at the last moment, went and made up her mistress's fire, and put out every thing she thought could be wanted, and, five minutes after seven o'clock, tied a scarlet handkerchief over her head, and stepped out at the back door.

What with her coal-black hair so streaked with red, her black eyes flashing in the starlight, and her glowing cheeks, she looked bewitching.

And, thus armed for conquest, wily, yet impassioned, she stole out, with noiseless foot and beating heart, to her appointment with her imprudent master.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE bill was paid; the black horse saddled and brought round to the door. Mr. and Mrs. Vint stood bareheaded to honor the parting guest, and the latter offered him the stirrup-cup.

Griffith looked round for Mercy; she was nowhere to be seen.

Then he said, piteously, to Mrs. Vint, "What! not even bid me good-by?"

Mrs. Vint replied, in a very low voice, that there was no disrespect intended. "The truth is, sir, she could not trust herself to see you go; but she bade me give you a message. Says she, 'Mother, tell him I pray God to bless him, go where he will.'"

Something rose in Griffith's throat. "Oh, dame!" said he, "if she only knew the truth, she would think better of me than she does. God bless her!"

And he rode sorrowfully away, alone in the world once more.

At the first turn in the road he wheeled his horse and took a last lingering look.

There was nothing vulgar nor inn-like in the "Packhorse." It stood fifty yards from the road, on a little rural green, and was picturesque itself. The front was entirely clad with large-leaved ivy. Shutters there were none; the windows, with their diamond panes, were lustrous squares, set like great eyes in the green ivy. It looked a pretty, peaceful retreat, and in it Griffith had found peace and a dove-like friend.

He sighed, and rode away from the sight; not raging and convulsed, as when he rode from Hershaw Castle, but somewhat sick at heart and very heavy.

He paced so slowly that it took him a quarter of an hour to reach the "Woodman," a wayside inn not two miles distant. As he went by, a farmer hailed him from the porch, and insisted on drinking with him, for he was very popular in the neighborhood. While they were thus employed, who should come out but Paul Carrick, booted and spurred; and flushed in the face, and rather the worse for liquor imbibed on the spot.

"So you are going, are ye?" said he. "A good job too." Then, turning to the other, "Master Gutteridge, never you save a man's life if you can anywise help it. I saved this one's; and what does he do but turn round and poison my sweetheart against me."

"How can you say so?" remonstrated Griffith. "I never belied you. Your name scarce ever passed my lips."

"Don't tell me," said Carrick. "However, she has come to her senses, and given your worship the sack. Ride you into Cumberland, and I to the 'Packhorse,' and take my own again."

With this he unhooked his nag from the wall, and clattered off to the "Packhorse."

Griffith sat a moment stupefied, and then his face was convulsed by his ruling passion. He

wheeled his horse, gave him the spur, and galloped after Carrick.

He soon came up with him, and yelled in his ear, "I'll teach you to spit your wormwood in my cup of sorrow."

Carrick shook his fist defiantly, and spurred his horse in turn.

It was an exciting race, and a novel one, but soon decided. The great black hunter went ahead, and still improved his advantage. Carrick, purple with rage, was full a quarter of a mile behind, when Griffith dashed furiously into the stable of the "Packhorse," and, leaving Black Dick panting and covered with foam, ran in search of Mercy.

The girl told him she was in the dairy: he looked in at the window, and there she was with her mother. With instinctive sense and fortitude she had fled to work. She was trying to churn, but it would not do. She had laid her shapely arm all across the churn, and her head on it, and was crying. Mrs. Vint was praising Carrick, and offering homely consolation.

"Ah! mother," sighed Mercy, "I could have made him happy. He does not know that; and he has turned his back on content. What will become of him now?"

Griffith heard no more; he went round to the front door, and rushed in.

"Take your own way, dame," said he, in great agitation. "Put up the banns when you like. Sweetheart, wilt wed with me? I'll make thee the best husband I can."

Mercy screamed faintly, and lifted up her hands; then she blushed and trembled to her very finger ends; but it ended in smiles of joy and her brow upon his shoulder, in which attitude, with Mrs. Vint patting him approvingly on the back, they were surprised by Paul Carrick. He came to the door, and there stood aghast.

The young man stared ruefully at the picture, and then said, very dryly, "I'm too late, methinks."

"That you be, Paul," said Mrs. Vint, cheerfully. "She is meat for your master."

"Don't—you—never—come to me—to save your life—no more," blubbered Paul, breaking down all of a sudden.

He then retired, little heeded, and came no more to the "Packhorse" for several days.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It is desirable that improper marriages should never be solemnized; and the Christian Church saw this many hundred years ago, and ordained that before a marriage, the banns should be cried in a church three Sundays, and any person there present might forbid the union of the parties, and allege the just impediment.

This precaution was feeble, but not wholly inadequate in the Middle Ages, for we know by good evidence that the priest was often interrupted and the banns forbidden.

But in modern days the banns are never forbidden; in other words, the precautionary measure that has come down to us from the thirteenth century is out of date and useless. It rests, indeed, on an estimate of publicity that has become childish. If persons about to marry were compelled to inscribe their names and descriptions in

a Matrimonial Weekly Gazette, and a copy of this were placed on a desk in ten thousand churches, perhaps we might stop one lady per annum from marrying her husband's brother, and one gentleman from wedding his neighbor's wife. But the crying of banns in a single parish church

but absent in fact, assented, by silence, to the union.

So Thomas Leicester wedded Mercy Vint, and took her home to the "Packhorse."

It would be well if those who stifle their consciences and commit crimes would set up a sort



"Carriek shook his fist defiantly, and spurred his horse in turn."

[Page 86.]

is a waste of the people's time and the parson's breath.

And so it proved in Griffith Gaunt's case. The Rev. William Wentworth published, in the usual recitative, the banns of marriage between Thomas Leicester, of the parish of Marylebone, in London, and Mercy Vint, spinster, of *this* parish; and creation, present ex hypothesi medioevale,

of medico-moral diary, and record their symptoms minutely day by day. Such records might help to clear away some vague conventional notions.

To tell the truth, our hero, and now malefactor (the combination is of high antiquity), enjoyed, for several months, the peace of mind that belongs of right to innocence, and his days passed

in a state of smooth complacency. Mercy was a good, wise, and tender wife; she naturally looked up to him after marriage more than she did before; she studied his happiness as she had never studied her own; she mastered his character, admired his good qualities, discerned his weaknesses, but did not view them as defects, only as little traits to be watched, lest she should give pain to "her master," as she called him.

Affection, in her, took a more obsequious form than it could ever assume in Kate Peyton. And yet she had great influence, and softly governed "her master" for his good. She would come into the room and take away the bottle if he was committing excess; but she had a way of doing it, so like a good but resolute mother, and so unlike a tergitant, that he never resisted. Upon the whole, she nursed his mind as, in earlier days, she had nursed his body.

And then she made him so comfortable; she observed him minutely to that end. As is the eye of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so Mercy Leicester's dove-like eye was ever watching "her master's" face, to learn the minutest features of his mind.

One evening he came in tired, and there was a black fire in the parlor. His countenance fell the sixteenth of an inch. You and I, sir, should never have noticed it; but Mercy did, and ever after there was a clear fire when he came in.

She noted, too, that he loved to play the viol de gambo, but disliked the trouble of tuning it. So, then, she tuned it for him.

When he came home at night, early or late, he was sure to find a dry pair of shoes on the rug, his six-stringed viol tuned to a hair, a bright fire, and a brighter wife smiling and radiant at his coming, and always neat; for, said she, "Shall I don my bravery for strangers, and not for my Thomas, that is the best of company?"

They used to go to church and come back together hand in hand like lovers, for the arm was rarely given in those days. And Griffith said to himself every Sunday, "What a comfort to have a Protestant wife."

But one day he was off his guard, and called her "Kate, my dear."

"Who is Kate?" said she, softly, but with a degree of trouble and intelligence that made him tremble.

"No matter," said he, all in a flutter; then solemnly, "Whoever she was, she is dead—dead."

"Ah!" said Mercy, very tenderly and solemnly, and under her breath, "you loved her, yet she must die." She paused; then, in a tone so exquisite I can only call it an angel's whisper, "Poor Kate!"

Griffith groaned aloud. "For God's sake never mention that name to me again. Let me forget she ever lived. She was not the true friend to me that you have been."

Mercy replied, softly, "Say not so, Thomas. You loved her well. Her death had all but cost me thine. Ah! well, we can not all be the first. I am not very jealous, for my part, and I thank God for't. Thon art a dear good husband to me, and that is enow."

Paul Carrick, unable to break off his habits, came to the "Packhorse" now and then, but Mercy protected her husband's heart from pain. She was kind and even pitiful, but so discreet and

resolute, and contrived to draw the line so clearly between her husband and her old sweetheart, that Griffith's foible could not burn him for want of fuel.

And so passed several months, and the man's heart was at peace. He could not love Mercy passionately as he had loved Kate, but he was full of real regard and esteem for her: it was one of those gentle, clinging attachments that outlast grand passions, and survive till death; a tender, pure affection, though built upon a crime.

They had been married, and lived in sweet content, about three quarters of a year, when trouble came, but in a vulgar form. A murrain carried off several of Harry Vint's cattle, and it then came out that he had purchased six of them on credit, and had been induced to set his hands to bills of exchange for them. His rent was also behind, and, in fact, his affairs were in a desperate condition.

He hid it as long as he could from them all; but at last, being served with a process for debt, and threatened with a distress and an execution, he called a family council and exposed the real state of things.

Mrs. Vint rated him soundly for keeping all this secret so long.

He whom they called Thomas Leicester remonstrated with him. "Had you told me in time," said he, "I had not paid forfeit for 'The Vine,' but settled there, and given you a home."

Mercy said never a word but "Poor father!"

As the peril drew nearer, the conversation became more animated and agitated, and soon the old people took to complaining of Thomas Leicester to his wife.

"Thon hast married a gentleman, and he hath not the heart to lift a hand to save thy folk from ruin."

"Say not so," pleaded Mercy; "to be sure he hath the heart, but not the means. 'Twas but yestreen he bade me sell his jewels for you. But, mother, I think they belonged to some one he loved, and she died. So, poor thing! how could I? Then, if you love me, blame me, and not him."

"Jewels, quotha! will they stop such a gap as ours?" was the contemptuous reply.

From complaining of him behind his back, the old people soon came to launching innuendoes obliquely at him. Here is one specimen out of a dozen.

"Wife, if our Mercy had wedded one of her own sort, mayhap he'd have helped us a bit."

"Ay, poor soul, and she so near her time. If the bailiffs come down on us next month, 'tis my belief we shall lose her as well as house and home."

The false Thomas Leicester let them run on in dogged silence, but every word was a stab.

And one day, when he had been baited sore with hints, he turned round on them fiercely and said, "Did I get you into this mess? It's all your own doing. Learn to see your own faults, and not be so hard on one that has been the best servant you ever had, gentleman or not."

Men can resist the remonstrances that wound them, and so irritate them, better than they can those gentle appeals that rouse no anger, but soften the whole heart. The old people stung him; but Mercy, without design, took a surer way. £1e

never said a word; but sometimes, when the discussions were at their height, she turned her dove-like eyes on him with a look so loving, so humbly inquiring, so timidly imploring, that his heart melted within him.

Ah! that is a true touch of nature and genuine observation of the sexes in the old song—

"My feyther urged me sair;
My mither didna speak;
But she looked me in the face
Till my hairt was like to break."

These silent, womanly, imploring looks of patient Mercy were mightier than argument or incentive.

The man knew all along where to get money, and how to get it. He had only to go to Hernshaw Castle. But his very soul shuddered at the idea. However, for Mercy's sake, he took the first step: he compelled himself to look the thing in the face, and discuss it with himself. A few months ago he could not have done this; he loved his lawful wife too much—hated her too much. But now, Mercy, and Time, had blunted both those passions, and he could ask himself whether he could not encounter Kate and her priest without any very violent emotion.

When they first set up house together he had spent his whole fortune, a sum of two thousand pounds, on repairing and embellishing Hernshaw Castle and grounds. Since she had driven him out of the house, he had a clear right to have back the money, and now he resolved he would have it, only what he wanted was to get it without going to the place in person.

And now Mercy's figure, as well as her imploring looks, moved him greatly. She was in that condition which appeals to a man's humanity and masculine pity as well as to his affection. To use the homely words of Scripture, she was great with child, and in that condition moved slowly about him, filling his pipe, and laying his slippers, and ministering to all his little comforts; she would make no difference; and when he saw the poor dove move about him so heavily and rather languidly, yet so zealously and tenderly, the man's very bowels yearned over her, and he felt as if he could die to do her a service.

So, one day, when she was standing by him, bending over his little round table, and filling his pipe with her neat hand, he took her by the other hand and drew her gently on his knee, her burden and all.

"Child!" said he, "do not thou fret. I know how to get money, and I'll do't, for thy sake."

"I know that," said she, softly; "can I not read thy face by this time?" and so laid her cheek to his. "But, Thomas, for my sake, get it honestly, or not at all," said she, still filling his pipe, with her cheek to his.

"I'll but take back my own," said he; "fear naught."

But, after thus positively pledging himself to Mercy, he became thoughtful and rather fretful; for he was still most averse to go to Hernshaw, and yet could hit upon no other way, since to employ an agent would be to let out that he had committed bigamy, and so risk his own neck and break Mercy's heart.

After all, his scale was turned by his foible.

Mrs. Vint had been weak enough to confide her trouble to a friend: it was all over the parish in three days.

Well, one day, in the kitchen of the inn, Paul Carrick, having drunk two pints of good ale, said to Vint, "Landlord, you ought to have married her to me. I've got two hundred pounds laid by. I'd have pulled you out of the mire and welcome."

"Would you, though, Paul," said Harry Vint; "then, by G—, I wish I had." Now Carrick bawled that out, and Griffith, who was at the door, heard it.

He walked into the kitchen ghastly pale, and spoke to Harry Vint first.

"I take your inn, your farm, and your debts on me," said he; "not one without t'other."

"Spoke like a man!" cried the landlord, joyfully; "and so be it—before these witnesses."

Griffith turned on Carrick: "This house is mine. Get out on't, ye *jealous*, mischief-making cur." And he took him by the collar and dragged him furiously out of the place, and sent him whirling into the middle of the road; then ran back for his hat and flung it out after him.

This done, he sat down boiling, and his eyes roved fiercely round the room in search of some other antagonist. But his strength was so great, and his face so altered with this sudden spasm of reviving jealousy, that nobody cared to provoke him farther.

After a while, however, Harry Vint muttered, dryly, "There goes one good customer."

Griffith took him up sternly: "If your debts are to be mine, your trade shall be mine too, that you had not the head to conduct."

"So be it, son-in-law," said the old man; "only you go so fast: you do take possession afore you pays the fee."

Griffith winced. "That shall be the last of your taunts, old man." He turned to the ostler, "Bill, give Black Dick his oats at sunrise, and in ten days, at farthest, I'll pay every shilling this house and farm do owe. Now, Master White, you'll put in hand a new sign-board for this inn—a fresh 'Packhorse,' and paint him jet black, with one white hoof (instead of chocolate), in honor of my nag Dick; and in place of Harry Vint you'll put in Thomas Leicester. See that is done against I come back, or come *you* here no more."

Soon after this scene he retired to tell Mercy, and on his departure the suppressed tongues went like mill-clacks.

Dick came round saddled at peep of day, but Mercy had been up more than an hour, and prepared her man's breakfast. She clung to him at parting, and cried a little, and whispered something in his ear for nobody else to hear: it was an entreaty that he would not be long gone, lest he should be far from her in the hour of her peril.

Thereupon he promised her, and kissed her tenderly, and bade her be of good heart, and so rode away northward with dogged resolution.

As soon as he was gone, Mercy's tears flowed without restraint.

Her father set himself to console her. "Thy good man," he said, "is but gone back to the high road for a night or two, to follow his trade of 'stand and deliver.' Fear naught, child; his pistols are well primed; I saw to that myself; and his horse is the fleetest in the county; you'll have him back in three days, and money in both

pockets. I warrant you his is a better trade than mine, and he is a fool to change it."

Griffith was two days upon the road, and all that time he was turning over and discussing in his mind how he should conduct the disagreeable but necessary business he had undertaken.

He determined, at last, to make the visit one of business only: no heat—no reproaches. That lovely, hateful woman might continue to dishonor his name, for he had himself abandoned it. He would not deign to receive any money that was hers, but his own two thousand pounds he would have, and two or three hundred on the spot by way of instalment. And, with these hard views, he drew near to Hernshaw; but the nearer he got, the slower he went; for what, at a distance, had seemed tolerably easy, began to get more and more difficult and repulsive. Moreover, his heart, which he thought he had steeled, began now to flutter a little, and somehow to shudder at the approaching interview.

CHAPTER XXX.

CAROLINE RYDER went to the gate of the Grove, and staid there two hours, but of course no Griffith came.

She returned the next night, and the next; and then she gave it up, and awaited an explanation. None came, and she was bitterly disappointed and indignant.

She began to hate Griffith, and to conceive a certain respect, and even a tepid friendship, for the other woman he had insulted.

Another clew to this change of feeling is to be found in a word she let drop in talking to another servant. "My mistress," said she, "bears it like a man."

In fact, Mrs. Gaunt's conduct at this period was truly noble.

She suffered months of torture, months of grief; but the high-spirited creature hid it from the world, and maintained a sad but high composure.

She wore her black, for she said, "How do I know he is alive?" She retrenched her establishment, reduced her expenses two thirds, and busied herself in works of charity and religion.

Her desolate condition attracted a gentleman who had once loved her, and now esteemed and pitied her profoundly—Sir George Neville.

He was still unmarried, and she was the cause—so far, at least, as this: she had put him out of conceit with the other ladies at that period when he had serious thoughts of marriage, and the inclination to marry at all had not since returned.

If the Gaunts had settled at Bolton, Sir George would have been their near neighbor; but Neville's Court was nine miles from Hernshaw Castle; and when they met, which was not very often, Mrs. Gaunt was on her guard to give Griffith no shadow of uneasiness. She was therefore rather more dignified and distant with Sir George than her own inclination and his merits would have prompted, for he was a superior and very agreeable man.

When it became quite certain that her husband had left her, Sir George rode up to Hernshaw Castle and called upon her.

She begged to be excused from seeing him.

Now Sir George was universally courted, and this rather nettled him: however, he soon learned that she received nobody except a few religious friends of her own sex.

Sir George then wrote her a letter that did him credit; it was full of worthy sentiment and good sense. For instance, he said he desired to intrude his friendly offices and his sympathy upon her, but nothing more. Time had cured him of those warmer feelings which had once ruffled his peace, but Time could not efface his tender esteem for the lady he had loved in his youth, nor his profound respect for her character.

Mrs. Gaunt wept over his gentle letter, and was on the verge of asking herself why she had chosen Griffith instead of this chevalier. She sent him a sweet yet prudent reply; she did not encourage him to visit her, but said that, if ever she should bring herself to receive visits from the gentlemen of the county during her husband's absence, he should be the first to know it. She signed herself his unhappy, but deeply grateful servant and friend.

One day, as she came out of a poor woman's cottage with a little basket on her arm which she had emptied in the cottage, she met Sir George Neville full.

He took off his hat and made her a profound bow. He was then about to ride on, but altered his mind, and dismounted to speak to her.

The interview was constrained at first, but ere long he ventured to tell her she really ought to consult with some old friend and practical man like himself. He would undertake to scour the country, and find her husband, if he was above ground.

"Me go a hunting the man," cried she, turning red; "not if he was my king as well as my husband. He knows where to find *me*, and that is enough."

"Well, but, madam, would you not like to learn where he is and what he is doing?"

"Why, yes, my good, kind friend, I *should* like to know that;" and, having pronounced these words with apparent calmness, she burst out crying, and almost ran away from him.

Sir George looked sadly after her, and formed a worthy resolution. He saw there was but one road to her regard. He resolved to hunt her husband for her without intruding on her, or giving her a voice in the matter. Sir George was a magistrate, and accustomed to organize inquiries. Spite of the length of time that had elapsed, he traced Griffith for a considerable distance; pending farther inquiries, he sent Mrs. Gaunt word that the truant had not made for the sea, but had gone due south.

Mrs. Gaunt returned him her warm thanks for this scrap of information. So long as Griffith remained in the island there was always a hope he might return to her. The money he had taken would soon be exhausted, and poverty might drive him to her; and she was so far humbled by grief that she could welcome him even on those terms.

Affliction tempers the proud. Mrs. Gaunt was deeply injured as well as insulted; but, for all that, in her many days and weeks of solitude and sorrow, she took herself to task, and saw her fault. She became more gentle, more considerate of her servants' feelings, more womanly.

For many months she could not enter "the Grove." The spirited woman's very flesh revolted at the sight of the place where she had been insulted and abandoned. But as she went deeper in religion, she forced herself to go to the gate and look in, and say out loud, "I gave the first offense," and then she would go in-doors again, quivering with the internal conflict.

Finally, being a Catholic, and therefore attaching more value to self-torture than we do, the poor soul made this very grove her place of penance. Once a week she had the fortitude to drag herself to the very spot where Griffith had denounced her, and there she would kneel and pray for him and for herself. And certainly, if humility and self-abasement were qualities of the body, here was to be seen their picture, for her way was to set the crucifix up at the foot of a tree, then to bow herself all down, between kneeling and lying, and put her lips meekly to the foot of the crucifix, and so pray long and earnestly.

Now one day, while she was thus crouching in prayer, a gentleman, booted, and spurred, and splashed, drew near, with hesitating steps. She was so absorbed she did not hear those steps at all till they were very near, but then she trembled all over, for her delicate ear recognized a manly tread she had not heard for many a day. She dared not move nor look, for she thought it was a mere sound, sent to her by heaven to comfort her. But the next moment a well-known mellow voice came like a thunder-clap, it shook her so.

"Forgive me, my good dame, but I desire to know—"

The question went no farther, for Kate Gaunt sprang to her feet with a loud scream, and stood glaring at Griffith Gaunt, and he at her.

And thus husband and wife met again—met, by some strange caprice of Destiny, on the very spot where they had parted so horribly.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE gaze these two persons bent on one another may be half imagined; it can never be described.

Griffith spoke first. "In black!" said he, in a whisper.

His voice was low; his face, though pale and grim, had not the terrible aspect he wore at parting.

So she thought he had come back in an amicable spirit, and she flew to him with a cry of love, and threw her arm round his neck, and panted on his shoulder.

At this reception, and the tremulous contact of one he had loved so dearly, a strange shudder ran through his frame—a shudder that marked his present repugnance, yet indicated her latent power.

He himself felt he had betrayed some weakness, and it was all the worse for her. He caught her wrist and put her from him, not roughly, but with a look of horror. "The day is gone by for that, madam," he gasped. Then, sternly, "Think you I came here to play the credulous husband?"

Mrs. Gaunt drew back in her turn, and faltered out, "What! come back here, and not sorry for

what you have done? not the least sorry? Oh, my heart! you have almost broken it."

"Prithee, no more of this," said Griffith, sternly. "You and I are naught to one another now and forever. But there, you are but a woman, and I did not come to quarrel with you." And he fixed his eyes on the ground.

"Thank God for that," faltered Mrs. Gaunt. "Oh, sir, the sight of you—the thought of what you were to me once, till jealousy blinded you. Lend me your arm, if you are a man; my limbs do fail me."

The shock had been too much; a pallor overspread her lovely features, her knees knocked together, and she was tottering like some tender tree cut down, when Griffith, who, with all his faults, was a man, put out his strong arm, and she clung to it, quivering all over, and weeping hysterically.

That little hand, with its little feminine clutch, trembling on his arm, raised a certain male compassion for her piteous condition, and he bestowed a few cold, sad words of encouragement on her. "Come, come," said he, gently, "I shall not trouble you long. I'm cured of my jealousy. 'Tis gone, along with my love. You and your saintly sinner are safe from me. I am come hither for my own—my two thousand pounds, and for nothing more."

"Ah! you are come back for money, not for me?" she murmured, with forced calmness.

"For money, and not for you, of course," said he, coldly.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the proud lady flung his arm from her. "Then money shall you have, and not me, nor aught of me but my contempt."

But she could not carry it off as heretofore. She turned her back haughtily on him, but at the first step she burst out crying. "Come, and I'll give you what you are come for," she sobbed. "Ungrateful! heartless! Oh, how little I knew this man!"

She crept away before him, drooping her head and crying bitterly; and he followed her, hanging his head and ill at ease, for there was such true passion in her voice, her streaming eyes, and indeed in her whole body, that he was moved, and the part he was playing revolted him. He felt confused and troubled, and asked himself how on earth it was that she, the guilty one, contrived to appear the injured one, and made him, the wronged one, feel almost remorseful.

Mrs. Gaunt took no more notice of him now than if he had been a dog following at her heels. She went into the drawing-room, and sank helplessly on the nearest couch; threw her head wearily back, and shut her eyes. Yet the tears trickled through the closed lids.

Griffith caught up a hand-bell and rang it vigorously.

Quick, light steps were soon heard pattering, and in darted Caroline Ryder with an anxious face, for of late she had conceived a certain sober regard for her mistress, who had ceased to be her successful rival, and who bore her grief like a man.

At sight of Griffith, Ryder screamed aloud and stood panting.

Mrs. Gaunt opened her eyes. "Ay, child, he

has come home," said she, bitterly; "his body, but not his heart."

She stretched her hand out feebly, and pointed to a bottle of salts that stood on the table. Ryder ran and put them to her nostrils. Mrs. Gaunt whispered in her ear, "Send a swift horse for Father Francis; tell him life or death!"

Ryder gave her a very intelligent look, and presently slipped out and ran into the stable-yard.

At the gate she caught sight of Griffith's horse. What does this quick-witted creature do but send the groom off on that horse, and not on Mrs. Gaunt's.

"Now, dame," said Griffith, doggedly, "are you better?"

"Ay, I thank you."

"Then listen to me. When you and I set up house together, I had two thousand pounds. I spent it on this house. The house is yours. You told me so, one day, you know."

"Ah! you can remember my faults."

"I remember all, Kate."

"Thank you, at least, for calling me Kate. Well, Griffith, since you abandoned us, I thought, and thought, and thought of all that might befall you, and I said, 'What will he do for money? My jewels, that you did me the honor to take, would not last you long, I feared; so I reduced my expenses three fourths at least, and I put by some money for your need.'"

Griffith looked amazed. "For my need?" said he.

"For whose else? I'll send for it, and place it in your hands—to-morrow."

"To-morrow? Why not to-day?"

"I have a favor to ask of you first."

"What is that?"

"Justice. If you are fond of money, I too have something I prize—my honor. You have belied and insulted me, sir; but I know you were under a delusion. I mean to remove that delusion, and make you see how little I am to blame; for, alas! I own I was imprudent. But oh, Griffith! as I hope to be saved, it was the imprudence of innocence and over-confidence."

"Mistress," said Griffith, in a stern yet agitated voice, "be advised, and leave all this; rouse not a man's sleeping wrath. Let by-gones be by-gones."

Mrs. Gaunt rose, and said faintly, "So be it. I must go, sir, and give some orders for your entertainment."

"Oh, don't put yourself about for me," said Griffith; "I am not the master of this house."

Mrs. Gaunt's lip trembled, but she was a match for him. "Then you are my guest," said she, "and my credit is concerned in your comfort."

She made him a courtesy as if he were a stranger, and marched to the door, concealing, with great pride and art, a certain trembling of her knees.

At the door she found Ryder, and bade her follow, much to that lady's disappointment; for she desired a *tête-à-tête* with Griffith, and an explanation.

As soon as the two women were out of Griffith's hearing, the mistress laid her hand on the servant's arm, and, giving way to her feelings, said, all in a flutter, "Child, if I have been a good mistress to thee, show it now. Help me

keep him in the house till Father Francis comes."

"I undertake to do so much," said Ryder, firmly. "Leave it to me, mistress."

Mrs. Gaunt threw her arms round Ryder's neck and kissed her.

It was done so ardently, and by a woman hitherto so dignified and proud, that Ryder was taken by surprise, and almost affected.

As for the service Mrs. Gaunt had asked of her, it suited her own designs.

"Mistress," said she, "be ruled by me; keep out of his way a bit while I get Miss Rose ready. You understand."

"Ah! I have one true friend in the house," said poor Mrs. Gaunt. She then confided in Ryder, and went away to give her own orders for Griffith's reception.

Ryder found little Rose, dressed her to perfection, and told her her dear papa was come home. She then worked upon the child's mind in that subtle way known to women, so that Rose went down stairs loaded and primed, though no instructions had been given her.

As for Griffith, he walked up and down, uneasy, and wished he had staid at the "Pack-horse." He had not bargained for all these emotions; the peace of mind he had enjoyed for some months seemed trickling away.

"Mercy, my dear," said he to himself, "'twill be a dear penny to me, I doubt."

Then he went to the window, and looked at the lawn, and sighed. Then he sat down and thought of the past.

While he sat thus moody, the door opened very softly, and a little cherubic face, with blue eyes and golden hair, peeped in. Griffith started. "Ah!" cried Rose, with a joyful scream, and out flew her little arms, and away she came, half running, half dancing, and was on his knee in a moment, with her arms round his neck.

"Papa! papa!" she cried. "Oh, my dear, dear, dear, darling papa!" And she kissed and patted his cheek again and again.

Her innocent endearments moved him to tears. "My pretty angel!" he sighed; "my lamb!"

"How your heart beats—don't cry, dear papa. Nobody is dead, only we thought you were. I'm so glad you are come home alive. Now we can take off this nasty black; I hate it."

"What! 'tis for me you wear it, pretty one?"

"Ay. Mamma made us. Poor mamma has been so unhappy. And that reminds me—you are a wicked man, papa. But I love you all one for that. It *is* so dull when every body is good like mamma; and she makes me dreadfully good too; but now you are come back, there will be a little, little wickedness again, it is to be hoped. Aren't you glad you are not dead, and are come home instead? I am."

"I am glad I have seen thee. Come, take my hand, and let us go look at the old place."

"Ay. But you must wait till I get on my new hat and feather."

"Nay, nay—art pretty enough bareheaded."

"Oh, papa! but I must, for decency. You are company now, you know."

"Dull company, sweetheart, thou'lt find me."

"I don't mean that: I mean, when you were here always, you were only papa; but now you come once in an age, you're COMPANY. I won't budge without 'em; so there, now."

"Well, little one, I do submit to thy hat and feather; only be quick, or I shall go forth without thee."

"If you dare," said Rose, impetuously; "for I won't be half a moment."

She ran and extorted from Ryder the new hat and feather, which by rights she was not to have worn until next month.

Griffith and his little girl went all over the well-known premises, he sad and moody, she excited and chattering, and nodding her head down, and cocking her eye up every now and then, to get a glimpse of her feather.

"And don't you go away again, dear papa. It *tis* so dull without you. Nobody comes here. Mamma won't let 'em."

"Nobody except Father Leonard," said Griffith, bitterly.

"Father Leonard? Why, he never comes here. Leonard! That is the beautiful priest that used to pat me on the head, and bid me love and honor my parents. And so I do. Only mamma is always crying, and you keep away; so how can I love and honor you when I never see you, and they keep telling me you are good for nothing, and dead."

"My young mistress, when did you see Father Leonard last?" said Griffith, gnawing his lip.

"How can I tell? Why, it was miles ago—when I was a mere girl. You know he went away before you did."

"I know nothing of the kind. Tell me the truth, now. He has visited here since I went away."

"Nay, papa."

"That is strange. She visits him, then?"

"What, mamma? She seldom stirs out, and never beyond the village. We keep no carriage now. Mamma is turned such a miser. She is afraid you will be poor; so she puts it all by for you. But now you are come, we shall have carriages and things again. Oh, by-the-by, Father Leonard! I heard them say he had left England, so I did."

"When was that?"

"Well, I think that was a little bit after you went away."

"That is strange," said Griffith, thoughtfully.

He led his little girl by the hand, but scarcely listened to her prattle, he was so surprised and puzzled by the information he had elicited from her.

Upon the whole, however, he concluded that his wife and the priest had perhaps been smitten with remorse, and had parted—when it was too late.

This, and the peace of mind he had found elsewhere, somewhat softened his feelings toward them. "So," thought he, "they were not hardened creatures, after all. Poor Kate!"

As these milder feelings gained on him, Rose suddenly uttered a joyful cry, and, looking up, he saw Mrs. Gaunt coming toward him, and Ryder behind her. Both were in gay colors, which, in fact, was what had so delighted Rose.

They came up, and Mrs. Gaunt seemed a changed woman. She looked young and beautiful, and bent a look of angelic affection on her daughter, and said to Griffith, "Is she not grown? Is she not lovely? Sure you will never desert her again."

"Twas not her I deserted, but her mother;

and she had played me false with her d—d priest," was Griffith's reply.

Mrs. Gaunt drew back with horror. "This before my girl?" she cried. "GRIFFITH GAUNT, YOU LIE!"

And this time it was the woman who menaced the man. She rose to six feet high, and advanced on him with her great gray eyes flashing flames at him. "Oh that I were a man!" she cried: "this insult should be the last. I'd lay you dead at her feet and mine."

Griffith actually drew back a step, for the wrath of such a woman was terrible—more terrible, perhaps, to a brave man than to a coward.

Then he put his hands in his pockets with a dogged air, and said, grinding his teeth, "But, as you are not a man, and I'm not a woman, we can't settle it that way. So I give you the last word, and good-day. I'm sore in want of money, but I find I can't pay the price it is like to cost me. Farewell."

"Begone!" said Mrs. Gaunt; "and this time forever. Ruffian and fool, I loathe the sight of you."

Rose ran weeping to her. "Oh, mamma, don't quarrel with papa;" then back to Griffith, "Oh, papa, don't quarrel with mamma—for my sake."

Griffith hung his head, and said, in a broken voice, "No, my lamb, we twain must not quarrel before thee. We will part in silence, as becomes those that once were dear, and have thee to show for't. Madam, I wish you all health and happiness. Adieu."

He turned on his heel, and Mrs. Gaunt took Rose to her knees, and bent and wept over her. Niobe over her last was not more graceful nor more sad.

As for Ryder, she stole quietly after her retiring master. She found him peering about, and asked him demurely what he was looking for.

"My good black horse, girl, to take me from this cursed place. Did I not tie him to your gate?"

"The black horse? Why, I sent him for Father Francis. Nay, listen to me, master; you know I was always your friend, and hard upon *her*. Well, since you went, things have come to pass that make me doubt. I begin to fear you were too hasty."

"Do you tell me this now, woman?" cried Griffith, furiously.

"How could I tell you before? Why did you break your trust with me? If you had come according to your letter, I'd have told you months ago what I tell you now; but, as I was saying, the priest never came near her after you left, and she never stirred abroad to meet him. More than that, he has left England."

"Remorse! Too late."

"Perhaps it may, sir. I couldn't say; but there is one coming that knows the very truth."

"Who is that?"

"Father Francis. The moment you came, sir, I took it on me to send for him. You know the man; he won't tell a lie to please our dame. And he knows all, for Leonard has confessed to him. I listened, and heard him say as much. Then, master, be advised, and get the truth from Father Francis."

Griffith trembled. "Francis is an honest man," said he; "I'll wait till he comes. But

oh, my lass, I find money may be bought too dear."

"Your chamber is ready, sir, and your clothes put out. Supper is ordered. Let me show you your room. We are all so happy now."

"Well," said he, listlessly, "since my horse is gone, and Francis coming, and I'm wearied and sick of the world, do what you will with me for this one day."

He followed her mechanically to a bedroom, where was a bright fire, and a fine shirt, and his silver-laced suit of clothes airing.

A sense of luxurious comfort struck him at the sight.

"Ay," he said, "I'll dress, and so to supper; I'm main hungry. It seems a man must eat, let his heart be ever so sore."

Before she left him, Ryder asked him coldly why he had broken his appointment with her.

"That is too long a story to tell you now," said he, coolly.

"Another time, then," said she; and went out smiling, but bitter at heart.

Griffith had a good wash, and enjoyed certain little conveniences which he had not at the "Packhorse." He doffed his riding-suit, and donned the magnificent dress Ryder had selected for him; and with his fine clothes he somehow put on more ceremonious manners.

He came down to the dining-room. To his surprise, he found it illuminated with wax candles, and the table and sideboard gorgeous with plate.

Supper soon smoked upon the board; but, though it was set for three, nobody else appeared.

Griffith inquired of Ryder whether he was to sup alone.

She replied, "My mistress desires you not to wait for her. She has no stomach."

"Well, then, I have," said Griffith, and fell to with a will.

Ryder, who waited on this occasion, stood and eyed him with curiosity. His conduct was so unlike a woman's.

Just as he concluded, the door opened, and a burly form entered. Griffith rose and embraced him with his arms and lips, after the fashion of the day. "Welcome, thou one honest priest!" said he.

"Welcome, thrice welcome, my long-lost son!" said the cordial Francis.

"Sit down, man, and eat with me. I'll begin again, for you."

"Presently, squire; I've work to do first. Go thou and bid thy mistress to come hither to me."

Ryder, to whom this was addressed, went out, and left the gentlemen together.

Father Francis drew out of his pocket two packets, carefully tied and sealed. He took a knife from the table and cut the strings, and broke the seals. Griffith eyed him with curiosity.

Father Francis looked at him. "These," said he, very gravely, "are the letters that Brother Leonard hath written, at sundry times, to Catharine Gaunt, and these are the letters Catharine Gaunt hath written to Brother Leonard."

Griffith trembled, and his face was convulsed.

"Let me read them at once," said he, and

stretched out his hand, with eyes like a dog's in the dark.

Francis withdrew them quietly. "Not till she is also present," said he.

At that, Griffith's good-nature, multiplied by a good supper, took the alarm. "Come, come, sir," said he, "have a little mercy. I know you are a just man, and, though a boon companion, most severe in all matters of morality. But, I tell you plainly, if you are going to drag this poor woman in the dirt, I shall go out of the room. What is the use tormenting her? I've told her my mind before her own child, and now I wish I had not. When I caught them in the Grove I lifted my hand to strike her, and she never winced; I had better have left that alone too, methinks. D—n the women; you are always in the wrong if you treat 'em like men. They are not wicked—they are weak. And this one hath lain in my bosom, and borne me two children, and one he lieth in the church-yard, and t'other hath her hair and my very eyes; and the truth is, I can't bear any man on earth to miscall her but myself. God help me; I doubt I love her still too well to sit by and see her tortured. She was all in black for her fault, poor penitent wretch. Give me the letters, but let her be."

Francis was moved by this appeal, but shook his head solemnly; and, ere Griffith could renew his argument, the door was flung open by Ryder, and a stately figure sailed in that took both the gentlemen by surprise.

It was Mrs. Gaunt in full dress—rich brocade that swept the ground; magnificent bust, like Parian marble varnished; and on her brow a diadem of emeralds and diamonds that gave her beauty an imperial stamp.

She swept into the room as only fine women can sweep, made Griffith a haughty courtesy, and suddenly lowered her head, and received Father Francis's blessing; then seated herself, and quietly awaited events.

"The brazen jade!" thought Griffith. "But how divinely beautiful!" And he became as agitated as she was calm—in appearance. For need I say her calmness was put on—defensive armor made for her by her pride and her sex?

The voice of Father Francis now rose, solid, grave, and too impressive to be interrupted.

"My daughter, and you who are her husband and my friend, I am here to do justice between you both, with God's help, and to show you both your faults.

"Catharine Gaunt, you began the mischief by encouraging another man to interfere between you and your husband in things secular."

"But, father, he was my director—my priest."

"My daughter, do you believe, with the Protestants, that marriage is a mere civil contract, or do you hold, with us, that it is one of the holy sacraments?"

"Can you ask me?" murmured Kate, reproachfully.

"Well, then, those whom God and the whole Church have in holy sacrament united, what right hath a single priest to disunite in heart, and make the wife false to any part whatever of that most holy vow? I hear, and not from you, that Leonard did set you against your husband's friends, withdrew you from society, and sent him abroad alone. In one word, he robbed your hus-

band of his companion and his friend. The sin was Leonard's, but the fault was yours. You were five years older than Leonard, and a woman of sense and experience; he but a boy by comparison. What right had you to surrender your understanding, in a matter of this kind, to a poor silly priest, fresh from his seminary, and as manifestly without a grain of common sense as he was full of piety?"

This remonstrance produced rather a striking effect on both those who heard it. Mrs. Gaunt seemed much struck with it. She leaned back in her chair, and put her hand to her brow with a sort of despairing gesture that Griffith could not very well understand: it seemed to him so disproportionate.

It softened him, however, and he faltered out, "Ay, father, that is how it all began. Would to heaven it had stopped there."

Francis resumed. "This false step led to consequences you never dreamed of; for one of your romantic notions is, that a priest is an angel. I have known you, in former times, try to take me for an angel; then would I throw cold water on your folly by calling lustily for chimes of beef and mugs of ale. But I suppose Leonard thought himself an angel too, and the upshot was, he fell in love with his neighbor's wife."

"And she with him," groaned Griffith.

"Not so," said Francis; "but perhaps she was nearer it than she thinks."

"Prove that," said Mrs. Gaunt, "and I'll fall on my knees to him before you."

Francis smiled, and proceeded. "To be sure, from the moment you discovered Leonard was in love with you, you drew back, and conducted yourself with prudence and propriety. Read these letters, sir, and tell me what you think of them."

He handed them to Griffith. Griffith's hand trembled visibly as he took them.

"Stay," said Father Francis; "your better way will be to read the whole correspondence according to their dates. Begin with this of Mrs. Gaunt's."

Griffith read the letter in an audible whisper.

Mrs. Gaunt turned her head a little, and for the first time lowered her eyes to the ground.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"DEAR FATHER AND FRIEND,—The words you spoke to me to-day admit but one meaning—you are jealous of my husband.

"Then you must be—how can I write it?—almost in love with me.

"So, then, my poor husband was wiser than I. He saw a rival in you, and he has one.

"I am deeply, deeply shocked. I ought to be very angry too; but, thinking of your solitary condition, and all the good you have done to my soul, my heart has no place for naught but pity. Only, as I am in my senses and you are not, you must now obey me, as heretofore I have obeyed you. You must seek another sphere of duty without delay.

"These seem harsh words from me to you. You will live to see they are kind ones.

"Write me one line, and no more, to say you will be ruled by me in this.

"God and the saints have you in their holy

keeping. So prays your affectionate and sorrowful daughter and true friend,

"CATHARINE GAUNT."

"Poor soul!" said Griffith. "Said I not that women are not wicked, but weak? Who would think that after all this he could get the better of her good resolves—the villain!"

"Now read his reply," said Father Francis.

"Ay," said Griffith. "So this is his one word of reply, is it? three pages closely writ—the villain! oh the villain!"

"Read the villain's letter," said Francis, calmly.

The letter was very humble and pathetic; the reply of a good though erring man, who owned that, in a moment of weakness, he had been betrayed into a feeling inconsistent with his holy profession. He begged his correspondent, however, not to judge him quite so hardly. He reminded her of his solitary life, his natural melancholy, and assured her that all men in his condition had moments when they envied those whose bosoms had partners. "Such a cry of anguish," said he, "was once wrung from a maiden queen, maugre all her pride. The Queen of Scots hath a son, and I am but a barren stock." He went on to say that prayer and vigilance united do much. "Do not despair so soon of me. Flight is not cure; let me rather stay, and, with God's help and the saints', overcome this unhappy weakness. If I fail, it will indeed be time for me to go and never again see the angelic face of my daughter and my benefactress."

Griffith laid down the letter. He was somewhat softened by it, and said, gently, "I can not understand it. This is not the letter of a thorough bad man neither."

"No," said Father Francis, coldly, "'tis the letter of a self-deceiver; and there is no more dangerous man, to himself and others, than your self-deceiver. But now let us see whether he can throw dust in her eyes as well as his own." And he handed him Kate's reply.

The first word of it was, "You deceive yourself." The writer then insisted, quietly, that he owed it to himself, to her, and to her husband, whose happiness he was destroying, to leave the place at her request.

"Either you must go, or I," said she; "and pray let it be you. Also this place is unworthy of your high gifts; and I love you, in my way, the way I mean to love you when we meet again—in Heaven; and I labor your advancement to a sphere more worthy of you."

I wish space permitted me to lay the whole correspondence before the reader, but I must confine myself to its general purport.

It proceeded in this way: the priest, humble, eloquent, pathetic, but gently, yet pertinaciously clinging to the place; the lady gentle, wise, and firm, detaching with her soft fingers first one hand, then another, of the poor priest's, till at last he was driven to the sorry excuse that he had no money to travel with nor place to go to.

"I can't understand it," said Griffith. "Are these letters all forged, or are there two Kate Gaunts?—the one that wrote these prudent letters, and the one I caught upon this very priest's arm. Perdition!"

Mrs. Gaunt started to her feet. "Methinks

'tis time for me to leave the room," said she, scarlet.

"Gently, my good friends; one thing at a time," said Francis. "Sit thou down, impetuous. The letters, sir, what think you of them?"

"I see no harm in them," said Griffith.

"No harm! is that all? But I say these are very remarkable letters, sir; and they show us that a woman may be innocent and unsuspicious, and so seem foolish, yet may be wise for all that. In her early communication with Leonard,

"At wisdom's gate Suspicion slept,
And thought no ill where no ill seemed."

But, you see, suspicion being once aroused, wisdom was not to be lulled nor blinded. But that is not all: these letters breathe a spirit of Christian charity; of true, and rare, and exalted piety; tender are they, without passion; wise, yet not cold; full of conjugal love, and of filial pity for an erring father, whom she leads, for his good, with firm yet dutiful hand. Trust to my great experience; doubt the chastity of snow rather than hers who could write these pure and exquisite lines. My good friend, you heard me rebuke and sneer at this poor lady for being too innocent and unsuspicious of man's frailty; now hear me own to you that I could no more have written these angelic letters than a barn-door fowl could soar to the mansions of the saints in heaven."

This unexpected tribute took Mrs. Gaunt's heart by storm; she threw her arms round Father Francis's neck, and wept upon his shoulder.

"Ah!" she sobbed, "you are the only one left that loves me."

She could not understand justice praising her; it must be love.

"Ay," said Griffith, in a broken voice, "she writes like an angel, she speaks like an angel, she looks like an angel. My heart says she is an angel, but my eyes have shown me she is naught. I left her unable to walk, by her way of it; I came back, and found her on that priest's arm, springing along like a greyhound." He buried his head in his hands, and groaned aloud.

Francis turned to Mrs. Gaunt, and said, a little severely, "How do you account for that?"

"I'll tell *you*, father," said Kate, "because you love me. I do not speak to *you*, sir, for you never loved me."

"I could give thee the lie," said Griffith, in a trembling voice, "but 'tis not worth while. Know, sir, that within twenty-four hours after I caught her with that villain, I lay a dying for her sake, and lost my wits; and, when I came to, they were a making my shroud in the very room where I lay. No matter—no matter—I never loved her."

"Alas! poor soul!" sighed Kate; "would I had died ere I brought thee to that!" And, with this, they both began to cry at the same moment.

"Ay, poor fools!" said Father Francis, softly, "neither of ye loved t'other, that is plain. So now sit you there, and let us have your explanation; for you must own appearances are strong against you."

Mrs. Gaunt drew her stool to Francis's knee, and, addressing herself to him alone, explained as follows:

"I saw Father Leonard was giving way, and only wanted one good push, after a manner.

Well, you know I had got him, by my friends, a good place in Ireland, and I had money by me for his journey; so, when my husband talked of going to the fair, I thought, 'Oh, if I could but get this settled to his mind before he comes back.' So I wrote a line to Leonard. You can read it if you like. 'Tis dated the 30th of September, I suppose."

"I will," said Francis, and read this out:

"DEAR FATHER AND FRIEND,—You have fought the good fight and conquered. Now, therefore, I *will* see you once more, and thank you for my husband (he is so unhappy,) and put the money for your journey into your hand myself—your journey to Ireland. You are the Duke of Leinster's chaplain, for I have accepted that place for you. Let me see you to-morrow in the grove, for a few minutes, at high noon. God bless you. CATHARINE GAUNT."

"Well, father," said Mrs. Gaunt, "'tis true that I could only walk two or three times across the room. But, alack, you know what women are; excitement gives us strength. With thinking that our unhappiness was at an end; that, when he should come back from the fair, I should fling my arm round his neck, and tell him I had removed the cause of his misery, and so of mine, I seemed to have wings; and I did walk with Leonard, and talked with rapture of the good he was to do in Ireland, and how he was to be a mitred abbot one day (for he is a great man), and poor little me be proud of him; and how we were all to be happy together in heaven, where is no marrying nor giving in marriage. This was our discourse; and I was just putting the purse into his hands, and bidding him God-speed, when he—for whom I fought against my woman's nature, and took this trying task upon me—broke in upon us with the face of a fiend, trampled on the poor good priest, that deserved veneration and consolation from him, of all men, and raised his hand to me, and was not man enough to kill me after all, but called me—ask him what he called me; see if he dares say it again before you; and then ran away, like a coward as he is, from the lady he had defiled with his rude tongue, and the heart he had broken. Forgive him? that I never will—never—never!"

"Who asked you to forgive him?" said the shrewd priest. "Your own heart. Come, look at him."

"Not I," said she, irresolutely. Then, still more feebly, "He is naught to me," and so stole a look at him.

Griffith, pale as ashes, had his hand on his brow, and his eyes were fixed with horror and remorse.

"Something tells me she has spoken the truth," he said, in a quivering voice. Then, with concentrated horror, "But, if so—oh God, what have I done? What shall I do?"

Mrs. Gaunt extended her arms toward him, across the priest.

"Why, fall at thy wife's knees, and ask her to forgive thee."

Griffith obeyed. He fell on his knees, and Mrs. Gaunt leaned her head on Francis's shoulder, and gave her hand across him to her remorse-stricken husband.

Neither spoke nor desired to speak; and even Father Francis sat silent, and enjoyed that

sweet glow which sometimes blesses the peacemaker, even in this world of wrangles and jars.

But the good soul had ridden hard, and the neglected meats emitted savory odors, and by-and-by he said, dryly, "I wonder whether that fat pullet tastes as well as it smells: can you tell me, squire?"

"Oh, inhospitable wretch that I am," said Mrs. Gaunt, "I thought but of my own heart."

"And forgot the stomach of your unspiritual father. But, madam, you are pale—you tremble."

"Tis nothing, sir; I shall soon be better. Sit you down and sup; I will return anon."

She retired, not to make a fuss; but her heart palpitated violently, and she had to sit down on the stairs.

Ryder, who was prowling about, found her there, and fetched her hartshorn.

Mrs. Gaunt got better, but felt so languid, and also hysterical, that she retired to her own room for the night, attended by the faithful Ryder, to whom she confided that a reconciliation had taken place, and, to celebrate it, gave her a dress she had only worn a year. This does not sound queenly to you ladies; but know that a week's wear tells far more on the flimsy trash you wear nowadays, than a year did on the glorious silks of Lyons. Mrs. Gaunt put on—thick as broadcloth, and embroidered so cunningly by the loom that it would pass for rarest needle-work. Besides, in those days, silk was silk.

As Ryder left her, she asked, "Where is the master to lie to-night?"

Mrs. Gaunt was not pleased at this question being put to her. Being a singular mixture of frankness and finesse, she had retired to her own room partly to test Griffith's heart. If he was as sincere as she was, he would not be content with a *public* reconciliation.

But the question being put to her plump, and by one of her own sex, she colored faintly, and said, "Why, is there not a bed in his room?"

"Oh yes, madam."

"Then see it be well aired. Put down all the things before the fire, and then tell me; I'll come and see. The feather bed, mind, as well as the sheets and blankets."

Ryder executed all this with zeal. She did more: though Griffith and Francis sat up very late, she sat up too; and, on the gentlemen leaving the supper-room, she met them both, with bed-candles, in a delightful cap, and undertook, with cordial smiles, to show them both their chambers.

"Tread softly on the landing, an' if it please you, gentlemen. My mistress hath been unwell, but she is in a fine sleep now, by the blessing, and I would not have her disturbed."

Father Francis went to bed thoughtful. There was something about Griffith he did not like; the man every now and then broke out into boisterous raptures, and presently relapsed into moody thoughtfulness. Francis almost feared that his cure was only temporary.

In the morning, before he left, he drew Mrs. Gaunt aside, and told her his misgivings. She replied that she thought she knew what was amiss, and would soon set that right.

Griffith tossed and turned in his bed, and spent a stormy night. His mind was in a con-

fused whirl, and his heart distracted. The wife he had truly loved so tenderly proved to be the very reverse of all he had lately thought her! She was pure as snow, and had always loved him—loved him now, and only wanted a good excuse to take him to her arms again. But Mercy Vint—his wife, his benefactress—a woman as chaste as Kate, as strict in life and morals—what was to become of her? How could he tell her she was not his wife? how reveal to her her own calamity and his treason? And, on the other hand, desert her without a word! and leave her hoping, fearing, pining, all her life! Affection, humanity, gratitude alike forbade it.

He came down in the morning, pale for him, and worn with the inward struggle.

Naturally there was a restraint between him and Mrs. Gaunt, and only short sentences passed between them.

He saw the peacemaker off, and then wandered all over the premises, and the past came nearer, and the present seemed to retire into the background.

He wandered about like one in a dream, and was so self-absorbed that he did not see Mrs. Gaunt coming toward him with observant eyes.

She met him full; he started like a guilty thing.

"Are you afraid of me?" said she, sweetly.

"No, my dear, not exactly; and yet I am—afraid, or ashamed, or both."

"You need not. I said I forgive you; and you know I am not one that does things by halves."

"You are an angel!" said he, warmly; "but (suddenly relapsing into despondency) we shall never be happy together again."

She sighed. "Say not so. Time and sweet recollections may heal even this wound by degrees."

"God grant it," said he, despairingly.

"And, though we can't be lovers again all at once, we may be friends; to begin, tell me, what have you on your mind? Come, make a friend of me."

He looked at her in alarm.

She smiled. "Shall I guess?" said she.

"You will never guess," said he, "and I shall never have the heart to tell you."

"Let me try. Well, I think you have run in debt, and are afraid to ask me for the money."

Griffith was greatly relieved by this conjecture. He drew a long breath; and, after a pause, said, cunningly, "What made you think that?"

"Because you came here for money, and not for happiness. You told me so in the Grove."

"That is true. What a sordid wretch you must think me!"

"No, because you were under a delusion. But I do believe you are just the man to turn reckless when you thought me false, and go drinking and dicing." She added, eagerly, "I do not suspect you of any thing worse."

He assured her that was not the way of it.

"Then tell me the way of it. You must not think, because I pester you not with questions, I have no curiosity. Oh, how often have I longed to be a bird, and watch you day and night unseen. How would you have liked that? I wish you had been one, to watch me. Ah! you don't answer. Could you have borne so close an inspection, sir?"

Griffith shuddered at the idea, and his eyes fell before the full gray orbs of his wife.

"Well, never mind," said she; "tell me your story."

"Well, then, when I left you I was raving mad."

"That is true, I'll be sworn."

"I let my horse go, and he took me near a hundred miles from here, and stopped at—at—a farm-house. The good people took me in."

"God bless them for it. I'll ride and thank them."

"Nay, nay, 'tis too far. There I fell sick of a fever—a brain-fever: the doctor blooded me."

"Alas! would he had taken mine instead."

"And I lost my wits for several days; and when I came back I was weak as water, and given up by the doctor; and the first thing I saw was an old hag set a making of my shroud."

Here the narrative was interrupted a moment by Mrs. Gaunt seizing him convulsively, and then holding him tenderly, as if he was even now about to be taken from her.

"The good people nursed me, and so did their daughter, and I came back from the grave. I took an inn; but I gave up that, and had to pay forfeit; and so my money all went; but they kept me on. To be sure, I helped on the farm: they kept a hostelry as well. By-and-by came that murrain among the cattle. Did you have it in these parts too?"

"I know not, nor care. Prithee leave cattle, and talk of thyself."

"Well, in a word, they were ruined, and going to be sold up. I could not bear that: I became bondsman for the old man. It was the least I could do. Kate, they had saved thy husband's life."

"Not a word more, Griffith. How much stand you pledged for?"

"A large sum."

"Would five hundred pounds be of any avail?"

"Five hundred pounds! Ay, that it would, and to spare; but where can I get so much money? And the time so short."

"Give me thy hand, and come with me," said Mrs. Gaunt, ardently.

She took his hand, and made a swift rush across the lawn. It was not exactly running nor walking, but some grand motion she had when excited. She put him to his stride to keep up with her at all, and in two minutes she had him into her boudoir. She unlocked a bureau all in a hurry, and took out a bag of gold. "There!" she cried, thrusting it into his hand, and blooming all over with joy and eagerness; "I thought you would want money, so I saved it up. You shall not be in debt a day longer. Now mount thy horse, and carry it to those good souls; only, for my sake, take the gardener with thee—I have no groom now but he—and both well armed."

"What! go this very day?"

"Ay, this very hour. I can bear thy absence for a day or two more, I have borne it so long, but I can not bear thy plighted word to stand in doubt a day—no, not an hour. I am your wife, sir, your true and loving wife; your honor is mine, and is as dear to me now as it was when you saw me with Father Leonard in the Grove, and read me all awry. Don't wait a moment; begone at once."

"Nay, nay, if I go to-morrow I shall be in time."

"Ay, but," said Mrs. Gaunt, very softly, "I am afraid if I keep you another hour I shall not have the heart to let you go at all; and the sooner gone, the sooner back for good, please God. There, give me one kiss to live on, and begone this instant."

He covered her hands with kisses and tears. "I'm not worthy to kiss any higher than thy hand," he said, and so ran sobbing from her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HE went straight to the stable and saddled Black Dick. But, in the very act, his nature revolted. What, turn his back on her the moment he had got hold of her money to take to the other! He could not do it.

He went back to her room, and came so suddenly that he caught her crying. He asked her what was the matter.

"Nothing," said she, with a sigh; "only a woman's foolish misgivings. I was afraid perhaps you would not come back. Forgive me."

"No fear of that," said he. "However, I have taken a resolve not to go to-day. If I go to-morrow I shall be just in time, and Dick wants a good day's rest."

Mrs. Gaunt said nothing, but her expressive face was triumphant.

Griffith and she took a walk together, and he, who used to be the more genial of the two, was dull, and she full of animation.

This whole day she laid herself out to bewitch her husband, and put him in high spirits.

It was up-hill work; but, when such a woman sets herself in earnest to delight a man, she reads our sex a lesson in the art that shows us we are all babies at it.

However, it was at supper she finally conquered.

Here the lights, her beauty set off with art, her deepening eyes, her satin skin, her happy excitement, her wit and tenderness, and joyous sprightliness, enveloped Griffith in an atmosphere of delight, and drove every thing out of his head but herself; and with this, if the truth must be told, the sparkling wines co-operated.

Griffith plied the bottle a little too freely. But Mrs. Gaunt, on this one occasion, had not the heart to check him. The more he toasted her, the more uxorious he became, and she could not deny herself even this joy; but, besides, she had less of the prudent wife in her just then than of the weak, indulgent mother. Any thing rather than check his love: she was greedy of it.

At last, however, she said to him, "Sweetheart, I shall go to bed; for I see, if I stay longer, I shall lead thee into a debauch. Be good, now; drink no more when I am gone, else I'll say thou lovest thy bottle more than thy wife."

He promised faithfully. But, when she was gone, modified his pledge by drinking just one bumper to her health, which bumper let in another; and when at last he retired to rest, he was in that state of mental confusion wherein the limbs appear to have a memory independent of the mind.

In this condition do some men's hands wind up their watches, the mind taking no appreciable part in the ceremony.

By some such act of what physicians call "organic memory," Griffith's feet carried him to the chamber he had slept in a thousand times, and not into the one Mrs. Ryder had taken him to the night before.

The next morning he came down rather late for him, and found himself treated with a great access of respect by the servants.

His position was no longer doubtful; he was the master of the house.

Mrs. Gaunt followed in due course, and sat at breakfast with him, looking young and blooming as Hebe, and her eye never off him long.

She had lived temperately, and had not yet passed the age when happiness can restore a woman's beauty and brightness in a single day.

As for him, he was like a man in a heavenly dream: he floated in the past and the present; the recent and the future seemed obscure and distant, and comparatively in a mist.

But that same afternoon, after a most affectionate farewell, and many promises to return as soon as ever he had discharged his obligations, Griffith Gaunt started for the "Packhorse," to carry to Mercy Leicester, alias Vint, the money Catharine Gaunt had saved by self-denial and economy.

And he went south a worse man than he came.

When he left Mercy Leicester, he was a bigamist in law, but not at heart. Kate was dead to him; he had given her up forever; and was constant and true to his new wife.

But now he was false to Mercy, yet not true to Kate; and, curiously enough, it was a day or two passed with his lawful wife that had demoralized him. His unlawful wife had hitherto done nothing but improve his character.

But a great fault once committed is often the first link in a chain of acts that look like crimes, but are, strictly speaking, consequences.

This man, blinded at first by his own foible, and, after that, the sport of circumstances, was single-hearted by nature, and his conscience was not hardened. He desired earnestly to free himself and both his wives from the cruel situation; but, to do this, one of them, he saw, must be abandoned entirely, and his heart bled for her.

A villain or a fool would have relished the situation; many men would have dallied with it; but, to do this erring man justice, he writhed and sorrowed under it, and sincerely desired to end it.

And this was why he prized Kate's money so. It enabled him to render a great service to her he had injured worse than he had the other, to her he saw he must abandon.

But this was feeble comfort after all. He rode along a miserable man; none the less wretched and remorseful that, ere he got into Lancashire, he saw his way clear. This was his resolve: to pay old Vint's debts with Kate's money; take the "Packhorse," get it made over to Mercy, give her the odd two hundred pounds and his jewels, and fly. He would never see her again, but would return home, and get the rest of the two thousand pounds from Kate, and send it to Mercy by a friend, who should tell her he was dead, and had left word with his relations to send her all his substance.

At last the "Packhorse" came in sight. He drew rein, and had half a mind to turn back;

but, instead of that, he crawled on, and very sick and cold he felt.

Many a man has marched to the scaffold with a less quaking heart than he to the "Packhorse."

His dejection contrasted strangely with the warm reception he met from every body there. And the house was full of women; and they seemed, somehow, all cock-a-hoop, and filled with admiration of him.

"Where is she?" said he, faintly.

"Hark to the poor soul!" said a gossip. "Dame Vint, where's thy daughter? gone out a-walking belike?"

At this the other women present chuckled and clucked.

"I'll bring you to her," said Mrs. Vint; "but prithee be quiet and reasonable, for, to be sure, she is none too strong."

There was some little preparation, and then Griffith was ushered into Mercy's room, and found her in bed, looking a little pale, but sweeter and comelier than ever. She had the bedclothes up to her chin.

"You look wan, my poor lass," said he; "what ails ye?"

"Naught ails me now thou art come," said she, lovingly.

Griffith put the bag on the table. "There," said he, "there's five hundred pounds in gold. I come not to thee empty-handed."

"Nor I to thee," said Mercy, with a heavenly smile. "See!"

And she drew down the bedclothes a little, and showed the face of a babe scarcely three days old—a little boy.

She turned in the bed, and tried to hold him up to his father, and said, "Here's *my* treasure for thee!" And the effort, the flush on her cheek, and the deep light in her dove-like eyes, told plainly that the poor soul thought she had contributed to their domestic wealth something far richer than Griffith had with his bag of gold.

The father uttered an ejaculation, and came to her side, and, for a moment, Nature overpowered every thing else. He kissed the child; he kissed Mercy again and again.

"Now God be praised for both," said he, passionately; "but most for thee, the best wife, the truest friend—" Here, thinking of her virtues, and the blow he had come to strike her, he broke down, and was almost choked with emotion; whereupon Mrs. Vint exerted female authority, and bundled him out of the room. "Is that the way to carry on at such a time?" said she. "'Twas enow to upset her altogether. Oh, but you men have little sense in women's matters. I looked to *you* to give her courage, not to set her off into hysterics in a manner. Nay, keep up her heart, or keep your distance, say I, that am her mother."

Griffith took this hint, and ever after took pity on Mercy's weak condition, and, suspending the fatal blow, did all he could to restore her to health and spirits.

Of course, to do that, he must deceive her, and so his life became a lie.

For hitherto she had never looked forward much; but now her eyes were always diving into futurity, and she lay smiling and discussing the prospects of her boy; and Griffith had to sit

by her side, and see her gnaw the boy's hand, and kiss his feet, and anticipate his brilliant career. He had to look and listen with an aching heart, and assent with feigned warmth, and an inward chill of horror and remorse.

One Drummond, a traveling artist, called, and Mercy, who had often refused to sit to him, consented now, for, she said, when he grows up, he shall know how his parents looked in their youth, the very year their darling was born. So Griffith had to sit with her, and excellent likenesses the man produced, but a horrible one of the child. And Griffith thought, "Poor soul! a little while, and this picture will be all that shall be left to thee of me."

For all this time he was actually transacting the preliminaries of separation. He got a man of law to make all sure. The farm, the stock, the furniture and good-will of the "Packhorse," all these he got assigned to Mercy Leicester for her own use, in consideration of three hundred and fifty pounds, whereof three hundred were devoted to clearing the concern of its debts, the odd fifty was to sweeten the pill to Harry Vint.

When the deed came to be executed, Mercy was surprised, and uttered a gentle remonstrance. "What have I to do with it?" said she. "'Tis thy money, not mine."

"No matter," said Griffith, "I choose to have it so."

"Your will is my law," said Mercy.

"Besides," said Griffith, "the old folk will not feel so sore, nor be afraid of being turned out, if it is in thy name."

"And that is true," said Mercy. "Now who had thought of that but my good man?" And she threw her arms lovingly round his neck, and gazed on him adoringly.

But his lion-like eyes avoided her dove-like eyes, and an involuntary shudder ran through him.

The habit of deceiving Mercy led to a consequence he had not anticipated. It tightened the chain that held him. She opened his eyes more and more to her deep affection, and he began to fear she would die if he abandoned her.

And then her present situation was so touching. She had borne him a lovely boy: that must be abandoned too, if he left her; and somehow the birth of this child had embellished the mother; a delicious pink had taken the place of her rustic bloom, and her beauty was more refined and delicate. So pure, so loving, so fair, so maternal, to wound her heart now, it seemed like stabbing an angel.

One day succeeded to another, and still Griffith had not the heart to carry out his resolve. He temporized; he wrote to Kate that he was detained by the business; and he staid on and on, strengthening his gratitude and his affection, and weakening his love for the absent and his resolution, till at last he became so distracted and divided in heart, and so demoralized, that he began to give up the idea of abandoning Mercy, and babbled to himself about fate and destiny, and decided that the most merciful course would be to deceive both women. Mercy was patient. Mercy was unsuspicious. She would content herself with occasional visits, if he could only feign some plausible tale to account for long absences.

Before he got into this mess he was a singularly truthful person, but now a lie was nothing

to him. But, for that matter, many a man has been first made a liar by his connection with two women, and by degrees has carried his mendacity into other things.

However, though now blessed with mendacity, he was cursed with a lack of invention, and sorely puzzled how to live at Hershaw, yet visit the "Packhorse."

The best thing he could hit upon was to pretend to turn bagman, and so Mercy would believe he was traveling all over England, when all the time he was quietly living at Hershaw.

And perhaps these long separations might prepare her heart for a final parting, and so let in his original plan a few years hence.

He prepared this manoeuvre with some art. He told her, one day, he had been to Lancaster, and there fallen in with a friend, who had as good as promised him the place of a commercial traveler for a mercantile house.

"A traveler!" said Mercy. "Heaven forbid! If you knew how I wearied for you when you went to Cumberland!"

"To Cumberland! How know you I went thither?"

"Oh, but I guessed that; but now I know it, by your face. But, go where thou wilt, the house is dull directly. Thou art our sunshine. Isn't he, my poppet?"

"Well, well, if it kept me too long from thee, I could give it up. But, child, we must think of young master. You could manage the inn, and your mother the farm, without me, and I should be earning money on my side. I want to make a gentleman of him."

"Any thing for him," said Mercy, "any thing in the world." But the tears stood in her eyes.

In furtherance of this deceit, Griffith did one day actually ride to Lancaster, and slept there. He wrote to Kate from that town to say he was detained by a slight illness, but hoped to be home in a week; and the next day brought Mercy home some ribbons, and told her he had seen the merchant and his brother, and they had made him a very fair offer. "But I've a week to think of it," said he, "so there's no hurry."

Mercy fixed her eyes on him in a very peculiar way, and made no reply. You must know that something very curious had happened while Griffith was gone to Lancaster.

A traveling peddler, passing by, was struck with the name on the sign-board. "Hallo!" said he, "why here's a namesake of mine; I'll have a glass of his ale, any way."

So he came into the public room, and called for a glass, taking care to open his pack and display his inviting wares. Harry Vint served him. "Here's your health," said the peddler. "You must drink with me, you must."

"And welcome," said the old man.

"Well," said the peddler, "I do travel five counties, but, for all that, you are the first namesake I have found. I am Thomas Leicester too, as sure as you are a living sinner."

The old man laughed and said, "Then no namesake of mine are you, for they call me Harry Vint. Thomas Leicester, he that keeps this inn now, is my son-in-law: he is gone to Lancaster this morning."

The peddler said that was a pity; he should have liked to see his namesake, and drink a glass with him.

"Come again to-morrow," said Harry Vint, ironically. "Dame," he cried, "come hither. Here's another Thomas Leicester for ye, wants to see our one."

Mrs. Vint turned her head and inspected the peddler from afar, as if he was some natural curiosity.

"Where do you come from, young man?" said she.

"Well, I came from Kendal last, but I am Cumberland born."

"Why, that is where t'other comes from," suggested Paul Carrick, who was once more a frequenter of the house.

"Like enow," said Mrs. Vint.

With that she dropped the matter as one of no consequence, and retired. But she went straight to Mercy, in the parlor, and told her there was a man in the kitchen that called himself Thomas Leicester.

"Well, mother?" said Mercy, with high indifference, for she was trying new socks on King Baby.

"He comes from Cumberland."

"Well, to be sure, names do run in counties."

"That is true; but, seems to me, he favors your man: much of a height, and— 'There, do just step into the kitchen a moment.'"

"La! mother," said Mercy, "I don't desire to see any more Thomas Leicesters than my own: 'tis the man, not the name. Isn't it, my lamb?"

Mrs. Vint went back to the kitchen discomfited; but, with quiet pertinacity, she brought Thomas Leicester into the parlor, pack and all.

"There, Mercy," said she, "lay out a penny with thy husband's namesake."

Mercy did not reply, for at that moment Thomas Leicester caught sight of Griffith's portrait, and gave a sudden start, and a most extraordinary look besides.

Both the women's eyes happened to be upon him, and they saw at once that he knew the original.

"You know my husband?" said Mercy Vint, after a while.

"Not I," said Leicester, looking askant at the picture.

"Don't tell no lies," said Mrs. Vint. "You do know him well." And she pointed her assertion by looking at the portrait.

"Oh, I know him whose picture hangs there, of course," said Leicester.

"Well, and that is her husband."

"Oh, that is her husband, is it?" And he was unaffectedly puzzled.

Mercy turned pale. "Yes, he is my husband," said she, "and this is our child. Can you tell me any thing about him? for he came a stranger to these parts. Belike you are a kinsman of his?"

"So they say."

This reply puzzled both women.

"Any way," said the peddler, "you see we are marked alike." And he showed a long black mole on his forehead. Mercy was now as curious as she had been indifferent. "Tell me all about him," said she: "how comes it that he is a gentleman and thou a peddler?"

"Well, because my mother was a gipsy, and his a gentlewoman."

"What brought him to these parts?"

"Trouble, they say."

"What trouble?"

"Nay, I know not." This after a slight but visible hesitation.

"But you have heard say."

"Well, I am always on the foot, and don't bide long enough in one place to learn all the gossip. But I do remember hearing he was gone to sea; and that was a lie, for he had settled here, and married you. T'fackins, he might have done worse. He has got a bonny, buxom wife, and a rare fine boy, to be sure."

And now the peddler was on his guard, and determined he would not be the one to break up the household he saw before him, and afflict the dove-eyed wife and mother. He was a good-natured fellow, and averse to make mischief with his own hands. Besides, he took for granted Griffith loved his new wife better than the old one; and, above all, the punishment of bigamy was severe, and was it for him to get the squire indicted, and branded in the hand for a felon?

So the women could get nothing more out of him; he lied, evaded, shuffled, and feigned utter ignorance, pleading, adroitly enough, his vagrant life.

All this, however, aroused vague suspicions in Mrs. Vint's mind, and she went and whispered them to her favorite, Paul Carrick. "And, Paul," said she, "call for what you like, and score it to me, only treat this peddler till he leaks out summut: to be sure he'll tell a man more than he will us."

Paul entered with zeal into this commission; treated the peddler to a chop, and plied him well with the best ale.

All this failed to loose the peddler's tongue at the time, but it muddled his judgment: on resuming his journey, he gave his entertainer a wink. Carrick rose and followed him out.

"You seem a decent lad," said the peddler, "and a good-hearted one. Wilt do me a favor?"

Carrick said he would, if it lay in his power.

"Oh, it is easy enow," said the peddler.

"Tis just to give Thomas Leicester, into his own hand, this here trifle as soon as ever he comes home." And he handed Carrick a hard substance wrapped in paper. Carrick promised.

"Ay, ay, lad," said the peddler, "but see you play fair, and give it him unbeknown. Now don't you be so simple as show it to any of the women-folk. D'ye understand?"

"All right," said Carrick, knowingly. And so the bonn companions for a day shook hands and parted.

And Carrick took the little parcel straight to Mrs. Vint, and told her every word the peddler had said.

And Mrs. Vint took the little parcel straight to Mercy, and told her what Carrick said the peddler had said.

And the peddler went off flushed with beer and self-complacency; for he thought he had drawn the line precisely; had faithfully discharged his promise to his lady and benefactress, but not so as to make mischief in another household.

Such was the power of Ale—in the last century.

Mercy undid the paper and found the bullet, on which was engraved

"I LOVE KATE."

As she read these words a knife seemed to enter her heart, the pang was so keen.

But she soon took herself to task. "Thou naughty woman," said she. "What! jealous of the dead?"

She wrapped the bullet up, put it carefully away, had a good cry, and was herself again.

But all this set her watching Griffith and reading his face. She had subtle, vague misgivings, and forbade her mother to mention the peddler's visit to Griffith yet a while. Woman-like, she preferred to worm out the truth.

On the evening of his return from Lancaster, as he was smoking his pipe, she quietly tested him. She fixed her eyes on him, and said, "One was here to-day that knows thee, and brought thee this." She then handed him the bullet, and watched his face.

Griffith undid the paper carelessly enough; but, at sight of the bullet, uttered a loud cry, and his eyes seemed ready to start out of his head.

He turned as pale as ashes, and stammered, piteously, "What—what—what d'y'e mean? In Heaven's name, what is this? How? Who?"

Mercy was surprised, but also much concerned at his distress, and tried to soothe him. She also asked him, piteously, whether she had done wrong to give it him. "God knows," said she, "'tis no business of mine to go and remind thee of her thou hast loved better mayhap than thou lovest me. But to keep it from thee, and she in her grave, oh, I had not the heart!"

But Griffith's agitation increased instead of diminishing; and, even while she was trying to soothe him, he rushed wildly out of the room and into the open air.

Mercy went, in perplexity and distress, and told her mother.

Mrs. Vint, not being blinded by affection, thought the whole thing had a very ugly look, and said as much. She gave it as her opinion that this Kate was alive, and had sent the token herself, to make mischief between man and wife.

"That shall she never," said Mercy, stoutly; but now her suspicions were thoroughly excited, and her happiness disturbed.

The next day Griffith found her in tears: he asked her what was the matter. She would not tell him.

"You have your secrets," said she, "and so now I have mine."

Griffith became very uneasy. For now Mercy was often in tears, and Mrs. Vint looked daggers at him.

All this was mysterious and unintelligible, and, to a guilty man, very alarming.

At last he implored Mercy to speak out. He wanted to know the worst.

Then Mercy did speak out. "You have deceived me," said she. "Kate is alive. This very morning, between sleeping and waking, you whispered her name; ay, false man, whispered it like a lover. You told me she was dead. But she is alive, and has sent you a reminder, and the bare sight of it hath turned your heart her way again. What shall I do? Why did you marry me, if you could not forget her? I did not want you to desert any woman

for me. The desire of my heart was always for your happiness. But oh, Thomas, deceit and falsehood will not bring you happiness, no more than they will me. What shall I do? what shall I do?"

Her tears flowed freely, and Griffith sat down, and groaned with horror and remorse, beside her.

He had not the courage to tell her the horrible truth, that Kate was his wife, and she was not.

"Do not thou afflict thyself," he muttered. "Of course, with you putting that bullet in my hand so sudden, it set my fancy a wandering back to other days."

"Ah!" said Mercy, "if it be no worse than that, there's little harm. But why did thy namesake start so at sight of thy picture?"

"My namesake!" cried Griffith, all agast.

"Ay, he that brought thee that love-token—Thomas Leicester. Nay, for very shame, feign not ignorance of him; why, he hath thy very mole on his temple, and knew thy picture in a moment. He is thy half-brother, is he not?"

"I am a ruined man," cried Griffith; and sank into a chair without power of motion.

"God help me, what is all this?" cried Mercy.

"Oh, Thomas, Thomas, I could forgive thee aught but deceit; for both our sakes, speak out, and tell me the worst; no harm shall come near thee while I live."

"How can I tell thee? I am an unfortunate man. The world will call me a villain; yet I am not a villain at heart. But who will believe me? I have broken the law. Thee I could trust, but not thy folk; they never loved me. Mercy, for pity's sake, when was that Thomas Leicester here?"

"Four days ago."

"Which way went he?"

"I hear he told Paul he was going to Cumberland."

"If he gets there before me, I shall rot in jail."

"Now Heaven forbid! Oh, Thomas, then mount and ride after him."

"I will, and this very moment."

He saddled Black Dick, and loaded his pistols for the journey; but, ere he went, a pale face looked out into the yard, and a finger beckoned. It was Mercy. She bade him follow her. She took him to her room, where their child was sleeping; and then she closed, and even locked the door.

"No soul can hear us," said she; "now, look me in the face, and tell me God's truth. Who and what are you?"

Griffith shuddered at this exordium; he made no reply.

Mercy went to a box, and took out an old shirt of his—the one he wore when he first came to the "Packhorse." She brought it to him and showed him "G. G." embroidered on it with a woman's hair (Ryder's).

"Here are your initials," said she; "now leave useless falsehoods; be a man, and tell me your real name."

"My name is Griffith Gaunt."

Mercy, sick at heart, turned her head away; but she had the resolution to urge him on. "Go on," said she, in an agonized whisper: "if you believe in God, and a judgment to come, deceive me no more. The truth! I say; the truth!"

"So be it," said Griffith, desperately: "when

I have told thee what a villain I am, I can die at thy feet, and then thou wilt forgive me."

"Who is Kate?" was all she replied.

"Kate is—MY WIFE."

"I thought her false; who could think any other, appearances were so strong against her? others thought so beside me. I raised my hand to kill her, but she never winced. I trampled on him I believed her paramour; I fled, and soon I lay a dying in this house for her sake. I told thee she was dead. Alas! I thought her dead to me. I went back to our house (it is her house), sore against the grain, to get money for thee and thine. Then she cleared herself, bright as the sun, and pure as snow. She was all in black for me; she had put by money against I should come to my senses and need it. I told her I owed a debt in Lancashire—a debt of gratitude as well as money; and so I did. How have I repaid it? The poor soul forced five hundred pounds on me. I had much ado to keep her from bringing it hither with her own hands—oh, villain! villain! Then I thought to leave thee, and send thee word I was dead, and heap money on thee. Money! But how could I? Thou wast my benefactress, my more than wife. All the riches of the world can make no return to thee. What—what shall I do? Shall I fly with thee and thy child across the seas? Shall I go back to her? No, the best thing I can do is to take this good pistol, and let the life out of my dishonorable carcass, and free two honest women from me by one resolute act."

In his despair he cocked the pistol, and, at a word from Mercy, this tale had ended.

But the poor woman, pale and trembling, tottered across the room and took it out of his hand. "I would not harm thy body nor thy soul," she gasped. "Let me draw my breath, and think." She rocked herself to and fro in silence.

Griffith stood trembling like a criminal before his judge.

It was long ere she could speak, for anguish. Yet when she did speak it was with a sort of deadly calm.

"Go tell the truth to *her*, as you have done to me; and, if she can forgive you, all the better for you. I can never forgive you, nor yet can harm you. My child, my child! Thy father is our ruin. Oh begone, man, or the sight of you will kill us both."

At that he fell at her knees; kissed, and wept over her cold hand, and, in his pity and despair, offered to cross the seas with her and her child, and so repair the wrong he had done her.

"Tempt me not," she sobbed. "Go; leave me. None here shall ever know thy crime but she whose heart thou' hast broken, and ruined her good name."

He took her in his arms in spite of her resistance, and kissed her passionately; but, for the first time, she shuddered at his embrace, and that gave him the power to leave her.

He rushed from her all but distracted, and rode away to Cumberland, but not to tell the truth to Kate if he could possibly help it.

was more desired in that county than Griffith Gaunt's.

And this I need not now be telling the reader, if I had related this story on the plan of a miscellaneous chronicle. But the affairs of the heart are so absorbing, that, even in a narrative, they thrust aside important circumstances of a less moving kind.

I must therefore go back a step before I advance farther. You must know that forty years before our Griffith Gaunt saw the light, another Griffith Gaunt was born in Cumberland—a younger son, and the family estate entailed; but a shrewd lad, who chose rather to hunt fortune elsewhere than to live in miserable dependence on his elder brother. His godfather, a city merchant, encouraged him, and he left Cumberland. He went into commerce, and in twenty years became a wealthy man—so wealthy that he lived to look down on his brother's estate, which he had once thought opulence. His life was all prosperity, with a single exception, but that a bitter one. He laid out some of his funds in a fashionable and beautiful wife. He loved her before marriage; and, as she was always cold to him, he loved her more and more.

In the second year of their marriage she ran away from him, and no beggar in the streets of London was so miserable as the wealthy merchant.

It blighted the man, and left him a sore heart all his days. He never married again, and railed on all womankind for this one. He led a solitary life in London till he was sixty-nine, and then, all of a sudden, Nature, or accident, or both, changed his whole habits. Word came to him that the family estate, already deeply mortgaged, was for sale, and a farmer who had rented a principal farm on it, and held a heavy mortgage, had made the highest offer.

Old Griffith sent down Mr. Atkins, his solicitor, post haste, and snapped the estate out of that purchaser's hands.

When the lands and house had been duly conveyed to him, he came down, and his heart seemed to bud again in the scenes of his childhood.

Finding the house small, and built in a valley instead of on rising ground, he got an army of bricklayers, and began to build a mansion with a rapidity unheard of in those parts; and he looked about for some one to inherit it.

The name of Gaunt had dwindled down to three since he left Cumberland; but a rich man never lacks relations. Featherstonhaughs, and Underhills, and even Smiths, poured in, with parish registers in their laps, and proved themselves Gauntesses, and flattered and carneyed the new head of the family.

Then the perverse old gentleman felt inclined to look elsewhere. He knew he had a namesake at the other side of the county, but this namesake did not come near him.

This independent Gaunt excited his curiosity and interest. He made inquiries, and heard that young Griffith had just quarreled with his wife, and gone away in despair.

Griffith senior took for granted that the fault lay with Mrs. Gaunt, and wasted some good sympathy on Griffith junior.

On farther inquiry, he learned that the truant was dependent on his wife. Then, argued the

CHAPTER XXXIV.

At this particular time, no man's presence

moneyed man, he would not run away from her but that his wound was deep.

The consequence of all this was, that he made a will very favorable to his absent and injured (?) namesake. He left numerous bequests, and made Griffith his residuary legatee; and, having settled this matter, urged on and superintended his workmen.

Alas! just as the roof was going on, a narrower house claimed him, and he made good the saying of the wise bard—

“Tu secunda marmora
Locas sub ipsum funus et sepulchri
Immemor struis domos.”

The heir of his own choosing could not be found to attend his funeral; and Mr. Atkins, his solicitor, a very worthy man, was really hurt at this. With the quiet bitterness of a displeased attorney, he merely sent Mrs. Gaunt word her husband inherited something under the will, and she would do well to produce him, or else furnish him (Atkins) with proof of his decease.

Mrs. Gaunt was offended by this cavalier note, and replied very like a woman, and very unlike business.

“I do not know where he is,” said she, “nor whether he is alive or dead. Nor do I feel disposed to raise the hue and cry after him. But favor me with your address, and I shall let you know should I hear any thing about him.”

Mr. Atkins was half annoyed, half amused at this piece of indifference. It never occurred to him that it might be all put on.

He wrote back to say that the estate was large, and, owing to the terms of the will, could not be administered without Mr. Griffith Gaunt; and, in the interest of the said Griffith Gaunt, and also of the other legatees, he really must advertise for him.

La Gaunt replied that he was very welcome to advertise for whomsoever he pleased.

Mr. Atkins was a very worthy man, but human. To tell the truth, he was himself one of the other legatees. He inherited (and, to be just, had well deserved) four thousand guineas under the will, and could not legally touch it without Griffith Gaunt. This little circumstance spurred his professional zeal.

Mr. Atkins advertised for Griffith Gaunt in the London and Cumberland papers, and in the usual enticing form. He was to apply to Mr. Atkins, Solicitor, of Gray's Inn, and he would hear of something greatly to his advantage.

These advertisements had not been out a fortnight when Griffith came home, as I have related.

But Mr. Atkins had punished Mrs. Gaunt for her insouciance by not informing her of the extent of her good fortune; so she merely told Griffith, casually, that old Griffith Gaunt had left him some money, and the solicitor, Mr. Atkins, could not get on without him. Even this information she did not vouchsafe until she had given him her £500, for she grudged Atkins the pleasure of supplying her husband with money.

However, as soon as Griffith left her, she wrote to Mr. Atkins to say that her husband had come home in perfect health, thank God; had only staid two days, but was to return in a week.

When ten days had elapsed Atkins wrote to inquire.

She replied he had not yet returned; and this

went on till Mr. Atkins showed considerable impatience.

As for Mrs. Gaunt, she made light of the matter to Mr. Atkins, but, in truth, this new mystery irritated her and pained her deeply.

In one respect she was more unhappy than she had been before he came back at all. Then she was alone; her door was closed to commentators. But now, on the strength of so happy a reconciliation, she had re-entered the world, and received visits from Sir George Neville and others; and, above all, had announced that Griffith would be back for good in a few days. So now his continued absence exposed her to sly questions from her own sex, to the interchange of glances between female visitors, as well as to the internal torture of doubt and suspense.

But what distracted her most was the view Mrs. Ryder took of the matter.

That experienced lady had begun to suspect some other woman was at the bottom of Griffith's conduct, and her own love for Griffith was now soured; repeated disappointments and affronts, *spretæque injuria formæ*, had not quite extinguished it, but had mixed so much spite with it that she was equally ready to kiss or to stab him.

So she took every opportunity to instill into her mistress, whose confidence she had won at last, that Griffith was false to her.

“That is the way with these men that are so ready to suspect others. Take my word for it, dame, he has carried your money to his leman. 'Tis still the honest woman that must bleed for some nasty trollop or other.”

She enforced this theory by examples drawn from her own observations in families, and gave the very names, and drove Mrs. Gaunt almost mad with fear, anger, jealousy, and cruel suspense. She could not sleep, she could not eat; she was in a constant fever.

Yet before the world she battled it out bravely, and indeed none but Ryder knew the anguish of her spirit, and her passionate wrath.

At last there came a most eventful day.

Mrs. Gaunt had summoned all her pride and fortitude, and invited certain ladies and gentlemen to dine and sup.

She was one of the true Spartan breed, and played the hostess as well as if her heart had been at ease. It was an age in which the host struggled fiercely to entertain the guests; and Mrs. Gaunt was taxing all her powers of pleasing in the dining-room, when an unexpected guest strolled into the kitchen—the peddler, Thomas Leicester.

Jane welcomed him cordially, and he was soon seated at a table eating his share of the feast.

Presently Mrs. Ryder came down, dressed in her best, and looking handsomer than ever.

At sight of her, Tom Leicester's affection revived; and he soon took occasion to whisper an inquiry whether she was still single.

“Ay,” said she, “and like to be.”

“Waiting for the master still? Mayhap I could cure you of that complaint. But least said is soonest mended.”

This mysterious hint showed Ryder he had a secret burning his bosom. The sly hussy said nothing just then, but plied him with ale and flattery, and, when he whispered a request for a

private meeting out of doors, she cast her eyes down and assented.

And in that meeting she carried herself so adroitly that he renewed his offer of marriage, and told her not to waste her fancy on a man who cared neither for her nor any other she in Cumberland.

"Prove that to me," said Ryder, cunningly, "and maybe I'll take you at your word."

The bribe was not to be resisted. Tom revealed to her, under a solemn promise of secrecy, that the squire had got a wife and child in Lancashire, and had a farm and an inn, which latter he kept, under the name of—Thomas Leicester.

In short, he told her, in his way, all the particulars I have told in mine.

She led him on with a voice of very velvet. He did not see how her cheek paled and her eyes flashed jealous fury.

When she had sucked him dry, she suddenly turned on him with a cold voice, and said, "I can't stay any longer with you just now. She will want me."

"You will meet me here again, lass?" said Tom, ruefully.

"Yes, for a minute, after supper."

She then left him and went to Mrs. Gaunt's room, and sat crouching before the fire, all hate and bitterness.

What? he had left the wife he loved, and yet had not turned to her!

She sat there, waiting for Mrs. Gaunt, and nursing her vindictive fury, two mortal hours.

At last, just before supper, Mrs. Gaunt came up to her room to cool her fevered hands and brow, and found this creature crouched by her fire, all in a heap, with pale cheek, and black eyes that glittered like basilisk's.

"What is the matter, child?" said Mrs. Gaunt.

"Good heavens! what hath happened?"

"Dame!" said Ryder, sternly, "I have got news of him."

"News of *him*?" faltered Mrs. Gaunt. "Bad news?"

"I don't know whether to tell you or not," said Ryder, sulkily, but with a touch of human feeling.

"What can not I bear? What have I not borne? Tell me the truth."

The words were stout, but she trembled all over in uttering them.

"Well, it is as I said, only worse. Dame, he has got a wife and child in another county, and no doubt been deceiving her, as he has *us*."

"A wife!" gasped Mrs. Gaunt, and one white hand clutched her bosom, and the other the mantel-piece.

"Ay, Thomas Leicester, that is in the kitchen now, saw her, and saw his picture hanging aside hers on the wall. And he goes by the name of Thomas Leicester: that was what made Tom go into the inn, seeing his own name on the sign-board. Nay, dame, never give way like that; lean on me—so. He is a villain, a false, jealous, double-faced villain."

Mrs. Gaunt's head fell on Ryder's shoulder, and she said no word, but only moaned and moaned, and her white teeth clicked convulsively together.

Ryder wept over her sad state: the tears were half impulse, half crocodile.

She applied hartshorn to the sufferer's nostrils, and tried to rouse her mind by exciting her anger. But all was in vain. There hung the betrayed wife, pale, crushed, and quivering under the cruel blow.

Ryder asked her if she should go down and excuse her to her guests.

She nodded a feeble assent.

Ryder then laid her down on the bed with her head low, and was just about to leave her on that errand, when hurried steps were heard outside the door, and one of the female servants knocked, and, not waiting to be invited, put her head in, and cried, "Oh, dame, the master is come home. He is in the kitchen."

CHAPTER XXXV.

Mrs. RYDER made an agitated motion with her hand, and gave the girl such a look withal that she retired precipitately.

But Mrs. Gaunt had caught the words, and they literally transformed her. She sprang off the bed and stood erect, and looked a Saxon Pythoness—golden hair streaming down her back, and gray eyes gleaming with fury.

She caught up a little ivory-handled knife and held it above her head.

"I'll drive this into his heart before them all," she cried, "and tell them the reason *afterward*!"

Ryder looked at her for a moment in utter terror. She saw a woman with grander passions than herself—a woman that looked quite capable of executing her sanguinary threat. Ryder made no more ado, but slipped out directly to prevent a meeting that might be attended with such terrible consequences.

She found her master in the kitchen, splashed with mud, drinking a horn of ale after his ride, and looking rather troubled and anxious; and, by the keen eye of her sex, she saw that the female servants were also in considerable anxiety. The fact is, they had just extemporized a lie.

Tom Leicester, being near the kitchen window, had seen Griffith ride into the court-yard.

At sight of that well-known figure he drew back, and his heart quaked at his own imprudence in confiding Griffith's secret to Caroline Ryder.

"Lasses," said he, hastily, "do me a kindness for old acquaintance. Here's the squire. For heaven's sake don't let him know I am in the house, or there will be bloodshed between us; he is a hasty man, and I'm another. I'll tell ye more by-and-by."

The next moment Griffith's tread was heard approaching the very door, and Leicester darted into the housekeeper's room, and hid in a cupboard there.

Griffith opened the kitchen door and stood upon the threshold.

The women courtesied to him, and were loud in welcome.

He returned their civilities briefly; and then his first word was, "Hath Thomas Leicester been here?"

You know how servants stick together against their master. The girls looked him in the face, like candid doves, and told him Leicester had not been that way for six months or more.

"Why, I have tracked him to within two miles," said Griffith, doubtfully.

"Then he is sure to come here," said Jane, adroitly. "He wouldn't ever think to go by us."

"The moment he enters the house you let me know. He is a mischief-making loon."

He then asked for a horn of ale; and, as he finished it, Ryder came in, and he turned to her, and asked her after her mistress.

"She was well just now," said Ryder, "but she has been took with a spasm; and it would be well, sir, if you could dress, and entertain the company in her place a while. For I must tell you your being so long away hath set their tongues going, and almost broken my lady's heart."

Griffith sighed, and said he could not help it, and, now he was here, he would do all in his power to please her. "I'll go to her at once," said he.

"No, sir," said Ryder, firmly. "Come with me. I want to speak to you."

She took him to his bachelor's room, and staid a few minutes to talk to him.

"Master," said she, solemnly, "things are very serious here. Why did you stay so long away? Our dame says some woman is at the bottom of it, and she'll put a knife into you if you come a night her."

This threat did not appal Griffith, as Ryder expected. Indeed, he seemed rather flattered.

"Poor Kate!" said he, "she is just the woman to do it. But I am afraid she does not love me enough for that. But, indeed, how should she?"

"Well, sir," replied Ryder, "oblige me by keeping clear of her for a little while. I have got orders to make your bed here. Now dress, like a good soul, and then go down and show respect to the company that is in your house, for they know you are here."

"Why, that is the least I can do," said Griffith. "Put you out what I am to wear, and then run and say I'll be with them anon."

Griffith walked into the dining-room, and, somewhat to his surprise, after what Ryder had said, found Mrs. Gaunt seated at the head of her own table, and presiding like a radiant queen over a brilliant assembly.

He walked in, and made a low bow to his guests first; then he approached, to greet his wife more freely; but she drew back decidedly, and made him a courtesy, the dignity and distance of which struck the whole company.

Sir George Neville, who was at the bottom of the table, proposed, with his usual courtesy, to resign his place to Griffith. But Mrs. Gaunt forbade the arrangement.

"No, Sir George," said she, "this is but an occasional visitor; you are my constant friend."

If this had been said pleasantly, well and good; but the guests looked in vain into their hostess's face for the smile that ought to have accompanied so strange a speech and disarmed it.

"Rarities are the more welcome," said a lady, coming to the rescue, and edged aside to make room for him.

"Madam," said Griffith, "I am in your debt for that explanation; but I hope you will be no rarity here, for all that."

Supper proceeded, but the mirth languished. Somehow or other, the chill fact that there was a grave quarrel between two at the table, and

those two man and wife, insinuated itself into the spirits of the guests.

There began to be lulls—fatal lulls. And in one of these, some unlucky voice was heard to murmur, "Such a meeting of man and wife I never saw."

The hearers felt miserable at this personality, that fell upon the ear of Silence like a thunder-bolt.

Griffith was ill-advised enough to notice the remark, though clearly not intended for his ears. For one thing, his jealousy had actually revived at the cool preference Kate had shown his old rival, Neville.

"Oh!" said he, bitterly, "a man is not always his wife's favorite."

"He does not always deserve to be," said Mrs. Gaunt, sternly.

When matters had gone that length, one idea seemed to occur pretty simultaneously to all the well-bred guests, and that idea was, *Sauve qui peut*.

Mrs. Gaunt took leave of them one by one, and husband and wife were left alone.

Mrs. Gaunt by this time was alarmed at the violence of her own passions, and wished to avoid Griffith for that night, at all events. So she cast one terribly stern look upon him, and was about to retire in grim silence. But he, indignant at the public affront she had put on him, and not aware of the true cause, unfortunately detained her. He said, sulkily, "What sort of a reception was that you gave me?"

This was too much. She turned on him furiously. "Too good for thee, thou heartless creature! Thomas Leicester is here, and I know thee for a villain."

"You know nothing," cried Griffith. "Would you believe that mischief-making knave? What has he told you?"

"Go back to her!" cried Mrs. Gaunt, furiously. "Me you can deceive and pillage no more. So, this was your jealousy! False and forsworn yourself, you dared to suspect and insult me. Ah! and you think I am the woman to endure this? I'll have your life for it! I'll have your life."

Griffith endeavored to soften her; protested that, notwithstanding appearances, he had never loved but her.

"I'll soon be rid of you and your love," said the raging woman. "The constables shall come for you to-morrow. You have seen how I can love, you shall know how I can hate."

She then, in her fury, poured out a torrent of reproaches and threats that made his blood run cold. He could not answer her: he *had* suspected her wrongfully, and been false to her himself. He *had* abused her generosity, and taken her money for Mercy Vint.

After one or two vain efforts to check the torrent, he sank into a chair, and hid his face in his hands.

But this did not disarm her at the time. Her raging voice and raging words were heard by the very servants long after he had ceased to defend himself.

At last she came out, pale with fury, and, finding Ryder near the door, shrieked out, "Take that reptile to his den, if he is mean enough to lie in this house;" then, lowering her voice, "and bring Thomas Leicester to me."

Ryder went to Leicester, and told him. But he objected to come. "You have betrayed me," said he. "Curse my weak heart and my loose tongue! I have done the poor squire an ill turn. I can never look him in the face again. But 'tis all thy fault, double-face. I hate the sight of thee."

At this Ryder shed some crocodile tears; and very soon, by her blandishments, obtained forgiveness.

And Leicester, since the mischief was done, was persuaded to see the dame, who was his recent benefactor, you know. He bargained, however, that the squire should be got to bed first, for he had a great dread of meeting him. "He'll break every bone in my skin," said Tom, "or else I shall do *him* a mischief in my defense."

Ryder herself saw the wisdom of this: she bade him stay quiet, and she went to look after Griffith.

She found him in the drawing-room, with his head on the table, in deep dejection.

She assumed authority, and said he must go to bed.

He rose humbly, and followed her like a submissive dog.

She took him to his room. There was no fire. "That is where you are to sleep," said she, spitefully.

"It is better than I deserve," said he, humbly.

The absurd rule about not hitting a man when he is down has never obtained a place in the great female soul; so Ryder lashed him without mercy.

"Well, sir," said she, "methinks you have gained little by breaking faith with me. Y' had better have set up your inn with me, than gone and sinned against the law."

"Much better: would to Heaven I had!"

"What d'ye mean to do now? You know the saying—between two stools—"

"Child," said Griffith, faintly, "methinks I shall trouble neither long. I am not so ill a man as I seem; but who will believe that? I shall not live long, and I shall leave an ill name behind me. *She* told me so just now. And, oh! her eye was so cruel; I saw my death in it."

"Come, come," said Ryder, relenting a little, "you mustn't believe every word an angry woman says. There, take my advice; go to bed; and in the morning don't speak to her; keep out of her way a day or two."

And with this piece of friendly advice she left him, and waited about till she thought he was in bed and asleep.

Then she brought Thomas Leicester up to her mistress.

But Griffith was not in bed, and he heard Leicester's heavy tread cross the landing. He waited and waited behind his door for more than half an hour, and then he heard the same heavy tread go away again.

By this time nearly all the inmates of the house were asleep.

About twenty-five minutes after Leicester left Mrs. Gaunt, Caroline Ryder stole quietly up stairs from the kitchen, and sat down to think it all over.

She then proceeded to undress, but had only taken off her gown, when she started and listened, for a cry of distress reached her from outside the house.

She darted to the window and threw it open.

Then she heard a cry more distinct. "Help! help!"

It was a clear, starlight night, but no moon. The mere shone before her, and the cries were on the bank.

Now came something more alarming still. A flash—a pistol-shot; and an agonized voice cried loudly, "Murder! Help! Murder!"

That voice she knew directly. It was Griffith Gaunt's.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RYDER ran screaming, and alarmed the other servants.

All the windows that looked on the mere were flung open.

But no more sounds were heard. A terrible silence brooded now over those clear waters.

The female servants huddled together and quaked; for who could doubt that a bloody deed had been done?

It was some time before they mustered the presence of mind to go and tell Mrs. Gaunt. At last they opened her door. She was not in her room.

Ryder ran to Griffith's. It was locked. She called to him. He made no reply.

They burst the door open. He was not there; and the window was open.

While their tongues were all going in consternation, Mrs. Gaunt was suddenly among them, very pale.

They turned, and looked at her aghast.

"What means all this?" said she. "Did I not hear cries outside?"

"Ay," said Ryder; "murder! and a pistol fired. Oh, my poor master!"

Mrs. Gaunt was white as death, but self-possessed. "Light torches this moment and search the place," said she.

There was only one man in the house, and he declined to go out alone. So Ryder and Mrs. Gaunt went with him, all three bearing lighted links.

They searched the place where Ryder had heard the cries. They went up and down the whole bank of the mere, and cast their torches' red light over the placid waters themselves. But there was nothing to be seen, alive or dead—no trace either of calamity or crime.

They roused the neighbors, and came back to the house with their clothes all dragged and dirty.

Mrs. Gaunt took Ryder apart, and asked her if she could guess at what time of the night Griffith had made his escape.

"He is a villain," said she, "yet I would not have him come to harm, God knows. There are thieves abroad. But I hope he ran away as soon as your back was turned, and so fell not in with them."

"Humph!" said Ryder. Then, looking Mrs. Gaunt in the face, she said, quietly, "Where were you when you heard the cries?"

"I was on the other side of the house."

"What, out o' doors at that time of night!"

"Ay, I was in the grove, praying."

"Did you hear any voice you knew?"

"No; all was too indistinct. I heard a pistol, but no words. Did you?"

"I heard no more than you, madam," said Ryder, trembling.

No one went to bed any more that night in Hernshaw Castle.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THIS mysterious circumstance made a great talk in the village and in the kitchen of Hernshaw Castle, but not in the drawing-room, for Mrs. Gaunt instantly closed her door to visitors, and let it be known that it was her intention to retire to a convent; and, in the mean time, she desired not to be disturbed.

Ryder made one or two attempts to draw her out upon the subject, but was sternly checked.

Pale, gloomy, and silent, the mistress of Hernshaw Castle moved about the place like the ghost of her former self. She never mentioned Griffith; forbade his name to be uttered in her hearing; and, strange to say, gave Ryder strict orders not to tell any one what she had heard from Thomas Leicester.

"This last insult is known but to you and me. If it ever gets abroad, you leave my service that very hour."

This injunction set Ryder thinking. However, she obeyed it to the letter. Her place was getting better and better, and she was a woman accustomed to keep secrets.

A pressing letter came from Mr. Atkins.

Mrs. Gaunt replied that her husband had come to Hernshaw, but had left again, and the period of his ultimate return was now more uncertain than ever.

On this Mr. Atkins came down to Hernshaw Castle. But Mrs. Gaunt would not see him: He retired very angry, and renewed his advertisements, but in a more explicit form. He now published that Griffith Gaunt, of Hernshaw and Bolton, was executor and residuary legatee to the late Griffith Gaunt, of Coggleswade, and requested him to apply directly to James Atkins, Solicitor, of Gray's Inn, London.

In due course this advertisement was read by the servants at Hernshaw, and shown by Ryder to Mrs. Gaunt.

She made no comment whatever, and contrived to render her pale face impenetrable.

Ryder became as silent and thoughtful as herself, and often sat bending her black judicial brows.

By-and-by dark mysterious words began to be thrown out in Hernshaw village.

"He will never come back at all."

"He will never come into that fortune."

"'Tis no use advertising for a man that is past reading."

These, and the like equivocal sayings, were followed by a vague buzz, which was traceable to no individual author, but seemed to rise on all sides, like a dark mist, and envelop that unhappy house.

And that dark mist of Rumor soon condensed itself into a palpable and terrible whisper, "Griffith Gaunt hath met with foul play."

No one of the servants told Mrs. Gaunt this horrid rumor.

But the women used to look at her, and after her, with strange eyes.

She noticed this, and felt, somehow, that her people were falling away from her. It added one drop to her bitter cup. She began to droop into a sort of calm, despondent lethargy.

Then came fresh trouble to rouse her.

Two of the county magistrates called on her in their official capacity, and, with perfect politeness, but a very grave air, requested her to inform them of all the circumstances attending her husband's disappearance.

She replied, coldly and curtly, that she knew very little about it. Her husband had left in the middle of the night.

"He came to stay?"

"I believe so."

"Came on horseback?"

"Yes."

"Did he go away on horseback?"

"No; for the horse is now in my stable."

"Is it true there was a quarrel between you and him that evening?"

"Gentlemen," said Mrs. Gaunt, drawing herself back haughtily, "did you come here to gratify your curiosity?"

"No, madam," said the elder of the two, "but to discharge a very serious and painful duty, in which I earnestly request you, and even advise you, to aid us. Was there a quarrel?"

"There was—a mortal quarrel."

The gentlemen exchanged glances, and the elder made a note.

"May we ask the subject of that quarrel?"

Mrs. Gaunt declined, positively, to enter into a matter so delicate.

A note was taken of this refusal.

"Are you aware, madam, that your husband's voice was heard calling for help, and that a pistol-shot was fired?"

Mrs. Gaunt trembled visibly.

"I heard the pistol-shot," said she, "but not the voice distinctly. Oh, I hope it was not his voice Ryder heard."

"Ryder, who is he?"

"Ryder is my lady's maid: her bedroom is on that side the house."

"Can we see Mrs. Ryder?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Gaunt, and rose and rang the bell.

Mrs. Ryder answered the bell in person very promptly, for she was listening at the door.

Being questioned, she told the magistrates what she had heard down by "the mere," and said she was sure it was her master's voice that cried "Help!" and "Murder!" And with this she began to cry.

Mrs. Gaunt trembled and turned pale.

The magistrates confined their questions to Ryder.

They elicited, however, very little more from her. She saw the drift of their questions, and had an impulse to defend her mistress there present. Behind her back it would have been otherwise.

That resolution once taken, two children might as well have tried to extract evidence from her as two justices of the peace.

And then Mrs. Gaunt's pale face and noble features touched them. The case was mysterious, but no more; and they departed little the

wiser, and with some apologies for the trouble they had given her.

The next week down came Mr. Atkins out of all patience, and determined to find Griffith Gaunt, or else obtain some proof of his decease.

He obtained two interviews with Ryder, and bribed her to tell him all she knew. He prosecuted other inquiries with more method than had hitherto been used, and elicited an important fact, viz., that Griffith Gaunt had been seen walking in a certain direction at one o'clock in the morning, followed at a short distance by a tall man with a knapsack, or the like, on his back.

The person who gave this tardy information was the wife of a certain farmer's man, who wired hares upon the sly. The man himself, being assured that, in a case so serious as this, no particular inquiries should be made how he came to be out so late, confirmed what his wife had let out, and added that both men had taken the way that would lead them to the bridge, meaning the bridge over the mere. More than that he could not say, for he had *met* them, and was full half a mile from the mere before those men could have reached it.

Following up this clew, Mr. Atkins learned so many ugly things that he went to the Bench on justifying day, and demanded a full and searching inquiry on the premises.

Sir George Neville, after in vain opposing this, rode off straight from the Bench to Hershaw, and in feeling terms conveyed the bad news to Mrs. Gaunt; and then, with the utmost delicacy, let her know that some suspicion rested upon herself, which she would do well to meet with the bold front of innocence.

"What suspicion, pray?" said Mrs. Gaunt, haughtily.

Sir George shrugged his shoulders, and replied, "That you have done Gaunt the honor—to put him out of the way."

Mrs. Gaunt took this very differently from what Sir George expected.

"What!" she cried, "are they so sure he is dead? murdered!"

And with this, she went into a passion of grief and remorse.

Even Sir George was puzzled, as well as affected, by her convulsive agitation.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THOUGH it was known the proposed inquiry might result in the committal of Mrs. Gaunt on a charge of murder, yet the respect in which she had hitherto been held, and the influence of Sir George Neville, who, having been her lover, stoutly maintained her innocence, prevailed so far that even this inquiry was private and at her own house. Only she was present in the character of a suspected person, and the witnesses were examined before her.

First, the poacher gave his evidence.

Then Jane the cook proved that a peddler called Thomas Leicester had been in the kitchen, and secreted about the premises till a late hour; and this Thomas Leicester corresponded exactly to the description given by the poacher.

This threw suspicion on Thomas Leicester, but did not connect Mrs. Gaunt with the deed in any way.

But Ryder's evidence filled this gap. She revealed three serious facts:

First, that, by her mistress's orders, she had introduced this very Leicester into her mistress's room about midnight, where he had remained nearly half an hour, and had then left the house.

Secondly, that Mrs. Gaunt herself had been out of doors after midnight.

And, thirdly, that she had listened at the door, and heard her threaten Griffith Gaunt's life.

This is a mere *précis* of the evidence, and altogether it looked so suspicious, that the magistrates, after telling Mrs. Gaunt she could ask the witnesses any question she chose, a suggestion she treated with marked contempt, put their heads together a moment, and whispered. Then the eldest of them, Mr. Underhill, who lived at a considerable distance, told her gravely he must commit her to take her trial at the next assizes.

"Do what you conceive to be your duty, gentlemen," said Mrs. Gaunt, with marvelous dignity. "If I do not assert my innocence, it is because I disdain the accusation too much."

"I shall take no part in the committal of this innocent lady," said Sir George Neville; and was about to leave the room.

But Mrs. Gaunt begged him to stay. "To be guilty is one thing," said she, "to be accused is another: I shall go to prison as easy as to my dinner, and to the gallows as to my bed."

The presiding magistrate was staggered a moment by these words, and it was not without considerable hesitation he took the warrant and prepared to fill it up.

Then Mr. Houseman, who had watched the proceedings very keenly, put in his word. "I am here for the accused person, sir, and, with your good leave, object to her committal—on grounds of law."

"What may they be, Mr. Houseman?" said the magistrate, civilly; and laid his pen down to hear them.

"Briefly, sir, these. Where a murder is proven, you can commit a subject of this realm upon suspicion. But you can not suspect the murder as well as the culprit, and so commit. The murder must be proved to the senses. Now in this case the death of Mr. Gaunt by violence is not proved. Indeed, his very death rests but upon suspicion. I admit that the law of England in this respect has once or twice been tampered with, and persons have even been executed where no *corpus delicti* was found; but what was the consequence? In each case the murdered man turned out to be alive, and justice was the only murderer. After Harrison's case, and *s, no Cumberland jury will ever commit for murder, unless the *corpus delicti* has been found, and with signs of violence upon it. Come, come, Mr. Atkins, you are too good a lawyer, and too humane a man, to send my client to prison on the suspicion of a suspicion, which you know the very breath of the judge will blow away, even if the grand jury let it go into court. I offer bail, ten thousand pounds in two sureties—Sir George Neville here present, and myself."

The magistrate looked at Mr. Atkins.

"I am not employed by the crown," said that gentleman, "but acting on mere civil grounds, and have no right nor wish to be severe. Bail by all means; but is the lady so sure of her in-

nocence as to lend me her assistance to find the corpus delicti?"

The question was so shrewdly put that any hesitation would have ruined Mrs. Gaunt.

Houseman therefore replied eagerly and promptly, "I answer for her, she will."

Mrs. Gaunt bowed her head in assent.

"Then," said Atkins, "I ask leave to drag, and, if need be, to drain that piece of water there, called 'the mere.'"

"Drag it or drain it, which you will," said Houseman.

Said Atkins, very impressively, "And, mark my words, at the bottom of that very sheet of water there I shall find the remains of the late Griffith Gaunt."

At these solemn words, coming, as they did, not from a loose unprofessional speaker, but from a lawyer, a man who measured all his words, a very keen observer might have seen a sort of tremor run all through Mr. Houseman's frame. The more admirable was the perfect coolness and seeming indifference with which he replied.

"Find him, and I'll admit suicide; find him, with signs of violence, and I'll admit homicide, by some person or persons unknown."

All farther remarks were interrupted by bustle and confusion.

Mrs. Gaunt had fainted dead away.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

OF course pity was the first feeling; but, by the time Mrs. Gaunt revived, her fainting, so soon after Mr. Atkins's proposal, had produced a sinister effect on the minds of all present, and every face showed it except the wary Houseman's.

On her retiring, it broke out first in murmurs, then in plain words.

As for Mr. Atkins, he now showed the moderation of an able man who feels he has a strong cause.

He merely said, "I think there should be constables about, in case of an escape being attempted; but I agree with Mr. Houseman that your worship's will be quite justified in taking bail, provided the corpus delicti should not be found. Gentlemen, you were most of you neighbors and friends of the deceased, and are, I am sure, lovers of justice: I do entreat you to aid me in searching that piece of water, by the side of which the deceased gentleman was heard to cry for help; and, much I fear, he cried in vain."

The persons thus appealed to entered into the matter with all the ardor of just men whose curiosity as well as justice is inflamed.

A set of old rusty drags was found on the premises, and men went punting up and down the mere, and dragged it.

Rude hooks were made by the village blacksmith, and fitted to cart-ropes; another boat was brought to Hernshaw in a wagon, and all that afternoon the bottom of the mere was raked, and some curious things fished up, but no dead man.

The next day a score of amateur dragsmen were out—some throwing their drags from the bridge, some circulating in boats, and even in large tubs.

And, meantime, Mr. Atkins and his crew went

steadily up and down, dragging every foot of those placid waters.

They worked till dinner-time, and brought up a good copper pot with two handles, a horse's head, and several decayed trunks of trees, which had become saturated, and sunk to the bottom.

At about three in the afternoon, two boys, who, for want of a boat, were dragging from the bridge, found something heavy, but elastic, at the end of their drag: they pulled up eagerly, and a thing like a huge turnip, half gnawed, came up with a great bob, and blasted their sight.

They let go, drags and all, and stood shrieking and shrieking.

Those who were nearest them called out, and asked what was the matter; but the boys did not reply, and their faces showed so white, that a woman who saw them screamed to Mr. Atkins, and said she was sure those boys had seen something out of the common.

Mr. Atkins came up, and found the boys blubbering. He encouraged them, and they told him a fearful thing had come up; it was like a man's head and shoulders all scooped out and gnawed by the fishes, and had torn the drags out of their hands.

Mr. Atkins made them tell him the exact place, and was soon upon it with his boat.

The water here was very deep, and though the boys kept pointing to the very spot, the drags found nothing for some time.

But at last they showed, by their resistance, that they had clawed hold of something.

"Draw slowly," said Mr. Atkins, "and *if it is*, be men, and hold fast."

The men drew slowly, slowly, and presently there rose to the surface a Thing to strike terror and loathing into the stoutest heart.

The mutilated remains of a human face and body.

The greedy pike had cleared, not the features only, but the entire flesh off the face, but had left the hair, and the tight skin of the forehead, though their teeth had raked this last. The remnants they had left made what they had mutilated doubly horrible, since now it was not a skull, not a skeleton, but a face and a man gnawed down to the bones, and hair, and feet. These last were in stout shoes that resisted even those voracious teeth; and a leathern stock had offered some little protection to the throat.

The men groaned, and hid their faces with one hand, and pulled softly to the shore with the other; and then, with half-averted faces, they drew the ghastly remains and fluttering rags gently and reverently to land.

Mr. Atkins yielded to Nature, and was violently sick at the sight he had searched for so eagerly.

As soon as he recovered his powers, he bade the constables guard the body (it was a body, in law), and see that no one laid so much as a finger on it until some magistrate had taken a deposition. He also sent a messenger to Mr. Houseman, telling him the corpus delicti was found. He did this, partly to show that gentleman he was right in his judgment, and partly out of common humanity; since, after this discovery, Mr. Houseman's client was sure to be tried for her life.

A magistrate soon came, and viewed the remains, and took careful notes of the state in which they were found.

Houseman came, and was much affected, both by the sight of his dead friend, so mutilated, and by the probable consequences to Mrs. Gaunt. However, as lawyer's fight very hard, he recovered himself enough to remark that there were no marks of violence before death, and insisted on this being inserted in the magistrate's notes.

hours, laid on a table, and covered with a white sheet.

The coroner's jury sat in the same room, as was then the custom, and the evidence I have already noticed was gone into, and the finding of the body deposed to. The jury, without hesitation, returned a verdict of willful murder.



"There rose to the surface a Thing to strike terror to the stoutest heart."

[Page 110.]

An inquest was ordered next day, and meantime Mrs. Gaunt was told she could not quit the upper apartments of her own house. Two constables were placed on the ground floor night and day.

Next day the remains were removed to the little inn where Griffith had spent so many jovial

Mrs. Gaunt was then brought in. She came, white as a ghost, leaning upon Houseman's shoulder.

Upon her entering, a juryman, by a humane impulse, drew the sheet over the remains again.

The coroner, according to the custom of the day, put a question to Mrs. Gaunt, with the view

of eliciting her guilt. If I remember right, he asked her how she came to be out of doors so late on the night of the murder. Mrs. Gaunt, however, was in no condition to answer queries. I doubt if she even heard this one. Her lovely eyes, dilated with horror, were fixed on that terrible sheet with a stony glance. "Show me," she gasped, "and let me die too."

The jurymen looked, with doubtful faces, at the coroner. He bowed a grave assent.

The nearest jurymen withdrew the sheet.

Now the belief was not yet extinct that the dead body shows some signs of its murderer's approach.

So every eye glared on her and it by turns, as she, with dilated, horror-stricken orbs, looked on that awful Thing.

CHAPTER XL.

SHE recoiled with a violent shudder at first, and hid her face with one hand. Then she gradually stole a horror-stricken side glance.

She had not looked at it so a moment, when she uttered a loud cry, and pointed at its feet with quivering hand.

"THE SHOES! THE SHOES! IT IS NOT MY GRIFFITH."

With this she fell into violent hysterics, and was carried out of the room at Houseman's earnest entreaty.

As soon as she was gone, Mr. Houseman, being freed from his fear that his client would commit herself irretrievably, recovered a show of composure, and his wits went keenly to work.

"On behalf of the accused," said he, "I admit the suicide of some person unknown, wearing heavy hobnailed shoes—probably one of the lower order of people."

This adroit remark produced some little effect, notwithstanding the strong feeling against the accused.

The coroner inquired if there were any bodily marks by which the remains could be identified.

"My master had a long black mole on his forehead," suggested Caroline Ryder.

"'Tis here!" cried a jurymen, bending over the remains.

And now they all gathered in great excitement round the corpus delicti; and there, sure enough, was a long black mole.

Then there was a buzz of pity for Griffith Gaunt, followed by a stern murmur of execration.

"Gentlemen," said the coroner, solemnly, "behold in this the finger of Heaven. The poor gentleman may well have put off his boots, since, it seems, he left his horse, but he could not take from his forehead his natal sign; and that, by God's will, hath strangely escaped mutilation, and revealed a most foul deed. We must now do our duty, gentlemen, without respect of persons."

A warrant was then issued for the apprehension of Thomas Leicester. And, that same night, Mrs. Gaunt left Hiernshaw in her own chariot between two constables, and escorted by armed yeomen.

Her proud head was bowed almost to her knees, and her streaming eyes hidden in her lovely hands. For why? A mob accompanied

her for miles, shouting "Murderess! Bloody Papist! Hast done to death the kindest gentleman in Cumberland. We'll all come to see thee hanged. Fair face but foul heart!" and groaning, hissing, and cursing, and, indeed, only kept from violence by the escort.

And so they took that poor, proud lady, and lodged her in Carlisle jail.

She was enceinte into the bargain by the man she was to be hanged for murdering.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE county was against her, with some few exceptions. Sir George Neville and Mr. Houseman stood stoutly by her.

Sir George's influence and money obtained her certain comforts in jail; and, in that day, the law of England was so far respected in a jail that untried prisoners were not thrown into cells, nor impeded, as they now are, in preparing their defense.

Her two staunch friends visited her every day, and tried to keep her heart up.

But they could not do it. She was in a state of dejection bordering upon lethargy.

"If he is dead," said she, "what matters it? If, by God's mercy, he is alive still, he will not let me die for want of a word from him. Impatience hath been my bane. Now I say, God's will be done. I am weary of the world."

Houseman tried every argument to rouse her out of this desperate frame of mind, but in vain. It ran its course, and then, behold, it passed away like a cloud, and there came a keen desire to live and defeat her accusers.

She made Houseman write out all the evidence against her, and she studied it by day, and thought of it by night, and often surprised both her friends by the acuteness of her remarks.

Mr. Atkins discontinued his advertisements; it was Houseman who now filled every paper with notices informing Griffith Gaunt of his accession to fortune, and entreated him for that, and other weighty reasons, to communicate in confidence with his old friend John Houseman, attorney-at-law.

Houseman was too wary to invite him to appear and save his wife, for in that case he feared the crown would use his advertisements as evidence at the trial, should Griffith not appear.

The fact is, Houseman relied more upon certain lacunæ in the evidence, and the absence of all marks of violence, than upon any hope that Griffith might be alive.

The assizes drew near, and no fresh light broke in upon this mysterious case.

Mrs. Gaunt lay in her bed at night, and thought, and thought.

Now the female understanding has sometimes remarkable power under such circumstances. By degrees Truth flashes across it like lightning in the dark.

After many such nightly meditations, Mrs. Gaunt sent one day for Sir George Neville and Mr. Houseman, and addressed them as follows: "I believe he is alive, and that I can guess where he is at this moment."

Both the gentlemen started and looked amazed.

"Yes, sirs; so sure as we sit here, he is now at a little inn in Lancashire called the 'Packhorse,' with a woman he calls his wife." And, with this, her face was scarlet, and her eyes flashed their old fire.

She exacted a solemn promise of secrecy from them, and then she told them all she had learned from Thomas Leicester.

"And so now," said she, "I believe you can save my life, if you think it is worth saving." And with this she began to cry bitterly.

But Houseman, the practical, had no patience with the pangs of love betrayed, and jealousy, and such small deer, in a client whose life was at stake.

"Great Heaven! madam," said he, roughly, "why did you not tell me this before?"

"Because I am not a man—to go and tell every thing all at once," sobbed Mrs. Gaunt. "Besides, I wanted to shield his good name, whose dear life they pretend I have taken."

As soon as she recovered her composure, she begged Sir George Neville to ride to the "Packhorse" for her. Sir George assented eagerly, but asked how he was to find it. "I have thought of that too," said she. "His black horse has been to and fro. Ride that horse into Lancashire, and give him his head; ten to one but he takes you to the place, or where you may hear of it. If not, go to Lancaster, and ask about the 'Packhorse.' He wrote to me from Lancaster—see." And she showed him the letter.

Sir George embraced with ardor this opportunity of serving her. "I'll be at Hershaw in one hour," said he, "and ride the black horse south at once."

"Excuse me," said Houseman; "but would it not be better for me to go? As a lawyer, I may be more able to cope with her."

"Nay," said Mrs. Gaunt, "Sir George is young and handsome; if he manages well, she will tell him more than she will you. All I beg of him is to drop the chevalier for this once, and see women with a woman's eyes and not a man's—see them *as they are*. Do not go telling a creature of this kind that she has had my money as well as my husband, and ought to pity me lying here in prison. Keep me out of her sight as much as you can. Whether Griffith hath deceived her or not, you will never raise in her any feeling but love for him, and hatred for his lawful wife. Dress like a yeoman; go quietly, and lodge in the house a day or two; begin by flattering her, and then get from her when she saw him last, or heard from him. But, indeed, I fear you will surprise him with her."

"Fear?" exclaimed Sir George.

"Well, hope, then," said the lady, and a tear trickled down her face in a moment. "But, if you do, promise me, on your honor as a gentleman, not to affront him, for I know you think him a villain!"

"A d—d villain! saving your presence."

"Well, sir, you have said it to me. Now promise me to say naught to *him* but just this: 'Rose Gaunt's mother she lies in Carlisle jail to be tried for her life for murdering you. She begs of you not to let her die publicly upon the scaffold, but quietly at home, of her broken heart.'"

"Write it," said Sir George, with the tears in

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his eyes, "that I may just put it in his hand, for I can never utter your sweet words to such a monster as he is."

Armed with this appeal, and several minute instructions, which it is needless to particularize here, that stanch friend rode into Lancashire.

And next day the black horse justified his mistress's sagacity and his own.

He seemed all along to know where he was going, and late in the afternoon he turned off the road on to a piece of green; and Sir George, with beating heart, saw right before him the sign of the "Packhorse," and, on coming nearer, the words

"THOMAS LEICESTER."

He dismounted at the door, and asked if he could have a bed.

Mrs. Vint said yes; and supper into the bargain, if he liked.

He ordered a substantial supper directly.

Mrs. Vint saw at once it was a good customer, and showed him into the parlor.

He sat down by the fire. But, the moment she retired, he got up and made a circuit of the house, looking quietly into every window, to see if he could catch a glance of Griffith Gaunt.

There were no signs of him; and Sir George returned to his parlor heavy-hearted. One hope, the greatest of all, had been defeated directly. Still, it was just possible that Griffith might be away on temporary business.

In this faint hope Sir George strolled about till his supper was ready for him.

When he had eaten his supper, he rang the bell, and, taking advantage of a common custom, insisted on the landlord, Thomas Leicester, taking a glass with him.

"Thomas Leicester!" said the girl. "He is not at home. But I'll send Master Vint."

Old Vint came in, and readily accepted an invitation to drink his guest's health.

Sir George found him loquacious, and soon extracted from him that his daughter Mercy was Leicester's wife; that Leicester was gone on a journey, and that Mercy was in care for him. "Leastways," said he, "she is very dull, and cries at times when her mother speaks of him; but she is too close to say much."

All this puzzled Sir George Neville sorely.

But greater surprises were in store.

The next morning, after breakfast, the servant came and told him Dame Leicester desired to see him.

He started at that, but put on nonchalance, and said he was at her service.

He was ushered into another parlor, and there he found a grave, comely young woman, seated working, with a child on the floor beside her. She rose quietly; he bowed low and respectfully; she blushed faintly, but, with every appearance of self-possession, courtesied to him, then eyed him point-blank a single moment, and requested him to be seated.

"I hear, sir," said she, "you did ask my father many questions last night; may I ask you one?"

Sir George colored, but bowed assent.

"From whom had you the black horse you ride?"

Now, if Sir George had not been a veracious

man, he would have been caught directly. But, although he saw at once the oversight he had committed, he replied, "I had him of a lady in Cumberland—one Mistress Gaunt."

Mercy Vint trembled.

"No doubt," said she, softly. "Excuse my question; you shall understand that the horse is well known here."

"Madam," said Sir George, "if you admire the horse, he is at your service for twenty pounds, though indeed he is worth more."

"I thank you, sir," said Mercy, "I have no desire for the horse whatever; and be pleased to excuse my curiosity; you must think me impertinent."

"Nay, madam," said Sir George, "I consider nothing impertinent that hath procured me the pleasure of an interview with you."

He then, as directed by Mrs. Gaunt, proceeded to flatter the mother and the child, and exerted those powers of pleasing which had made him irresistible in society.

Here, however, he found they went a very little way. Mercy did not even smile. She cast out of her dove-like eyes a gentle, humble, reproachful glance, as much as to say, "What! do I seem so vain a creature as to believe all this?"

Sir George himself had tact and sensibility, and by-and-by became discontented with the part he was playing under those meek, honest eyes.

There was a pause; and, as her sex have a wonderful art of reading the face, Mercy looked at him steadily, and said, "Yes, sir, 'tis best to be straightforward, especially with women-folk."

Before he could recover this little facer, she said, quietly, "What is your name?"

"George Neville."

"Well, George Neville," said Mercy, very slowly and softly, "when you have a mind to tell me what you came here for, and who sent you, you will find me in this little room. I seldom leave it now. I beg you to speak your errand to none but me." And she sighed deeply.

Sir George bowed low, and retired to collect his wits.

He had come here strongly prepossessed against Mercy. But, instead of a vulgar, shallow woman, whom he was to surprise into confession, he encountered a soft-eyed Puritan, all unpretending dignity, grace, propriety, and sagacity.

"Flatter her!" said he to himself; "I might as well flatter an iceberg. Outwit her! I feel like a child beside her."

He strolled about in a brown study, not knowing what to do.

She had given him a fair opening. She had invited him to tell the truth. But he was afraid to take her at her word; and yet what was the use to persist in what his own eyes told him was the wrong course?

While he hesitated, and debated within himself, a trifling incident turned the scale.

A poor woman came begging, with her child, and was received rather roughly by Harry Vint. "Pass on, good woman," said he; "we want no tramps here."

Then a window was opened on the ground floor, and Mercy beckoned the woman. Sir George flattened himself against the wall, and listened to the two talking.

Mercy examined the woman gently, but shrewd-

ly, and elicited a tale of genuine distress. Sir George then saw her hand out to the woman some warm flannel for herself, a piece of stuff for the child, a large piece of bread, and a sixpence.

He also caught sight of Mercy's dove-like eyes as she bestowed her alms, and they were lit with an inward lustre.

"She can not be an ill woman," thought Sir George. "I'll e'en go by my own eyes and judgment. After all, Mrs. Gaunt has never seen her, and I have."

He went and knocked at Mercy's door.

"Come in," said a mild voice.

Neville entered, and said, abruptly, and with great emotion, "Madam, I see you can feel for the unhappy, so I take my own way now, and appeal to your pity. I have come to speak to you on the saddest business."

"You come from *him*," said Mercy, closing her lips tight; but her bosom heaved. Her heart and her judgment grappled like wrestlers that moment.

"Nay, madam," said Sir George, "I come from *her*."

Mercy knew in a moment who "her" must be.

She looked scared, and drew back with manifest signs of repulsion.

The movement did not escape Sir George: it alarmed him. He remembered what Mrs. Gaunt had said—that this woman would be sure to hate Gaunt's lawful wife. But it was too late to go back. He did the next best thing—he rushed on.

He threw himself on his knees before Mercy Vint.

"Oh, madam!" he cried, piteously, "do not set your heart against the most unhappy lady in England. If you did but know her—her nobleness, her misery! Before you steel yourself against me, her friend, let me ask you one question. Do you know where Mrs. Gaunt is at this moment?"

Mercy answered, coldly, "How should I know where the lady is?"

"Well, then, she lies in Carlisle jail."

"She lies—in Carlisle jail?" repeated Mercy, looking all confused.

"They accuse her of murdering her husband."

Mercy uttered a scream, and, catching her child up off the floor, began to rock herself and moan over it.

"No, no, no," cried Sir George, "she is innocent—she is innocent."

"What is that to *me*?" cried Mercy, wildly.

"He is murdered, he is dead, and my child an orphan." And so she went on moaning and rocking herself.

"But I tell you he is not dead at all," cried Sir George. "'Tis all a mistake. When did you see him last?"

"More than six weeks ago."

"I mean, when did you hear from him last?"

"Never since that day."

Sir George groaned aloud at this intelligence.

And Mercy, who heard him groan, was heart-broken. She accused herself of Griffith's death.

"'Twas I who drove him from me," said she.

"'Twas I who bade him go back to his lawful wife; and the wretch hated him. I sent him to his death." Her grief was wild and deep; she could not hear Sir George's arguments.

But presently she said, sternly, "What does that woman say for herself?"

"Madam," said Sir George, dejectedly, "Heaven knows you are in no condition to fathom a mystery that hath puzzled wiser heads than yours or mine, and I am but little able to lay the tale before you fairly; for your grief it moves me deeply, and I could curse myself for putting the matter to you so bluntly and uncouthly. Permit me to retire a while, and compose my own spirits for the task I have undertaken too rashly."

"Nay, George Neville," said Mercy, "stay you there: only give me a moment to draw my breath."

She struggled hard for a little composure, and, after a shower of tears, she hung her head over the chair like a crushed thing, but made him a sign of attention.

Sir George told the story as fairly as he could, only, of course, his bias was in favor of Mrs. Gaunt; but as Mercy's bias was against her, this brought the thing nearly square.

When he came to the finding of the body, Mercy was seized with a deadly faintness; and, though she did not become insensible, yet she was in no condition to judge or even to comprehend.

Sir George was moved with pity, and would have called for help; but she shook her head. So then he sprinkled water on her face, and slapped her hand—and a beautifully moulded hand it was.

When she got a little better she sobbed faintly, and, sobbing, thanked him, and begged him to go on.

"My mind is stronger than my heart," she said. "I'll hear it all, though it kill me where I sit."

Sir George went on, and, to avoid repetition, I must ask the reader to understand that he left out nothing whatever which has been hitherto related in these pages, and, in fact, told her one or two little things that I have omitted.

When he had done, she sat quite still a minute or two, pale as a statue.

Then she turned to Neville, and said solemnly, "You wish to know the truth in this dark matter, for dark it is in very sooth."

Neville was much impressed by her manner, and answered respectfully, Yes, he desired to know—by all means.

"Then take my hand," said Mercy, "and kneel down with me."

Sir George looked surprised, but obeyed, and knelt down beside her, with his hand in hers.

There was a long pause, and then took place a transformation.

The dove-like eyes were lifted to Heaven, and gleamed like opals with an inward and celestial light; the comely face shone with a higher beauty, and the rich voice rose in ardent supplication.

"Thou God, to whom all hearts be known, and no secrets hid from thine eye, look down now on thy servant in sore trouble, that putteth her trust in thee. Give wisdom to the simple this day, and understanding to the lowly. Thou that didst reveal to babes and sucklings the great things that were hidden from the wise, oh show us the truth in this dark matter: enlighten us by thy Spirit, for his dear sake, who suffered more sorrows than I suffer now. Amen, Amen."

Then she looked at Neville, and he said "Amen" with all his heart, and the tears in his eyes.

He had never heard real live prayer before. Here the little hand gripped his hard as she wrestled, and the heart seemed to rise out of the bosom and fly to heaven on the sublime and thrilling voice.

They rose, and she sat down, but it seemed as if her eyes, once raised to heaven in prayer, could not come down again: they remained fixed and angelic, and her lips still moved in supplication.

Sir George Neville, though a loose liver, was no scoffer; he was smitten with reverence for this inspired countenance, and retired, bowing low and obsequiously.

He took a long walk and thought it all over. One thing was clear and consoling. He felt sure he had done wisely to disobey Mrs. Gaunt's instructions, and make a friend of Mercy, instead of trying to set his wits against hers. Ere he returned to the "Packhorse," he had determined to take another step in the right direction. He did not like to agitate her with another interview so soon, but he wrote her a little letter.

"MADAM,—When I came here I did not know you, and therefore I feared to trust you too far. But, now I do know you for the best woman in England, I take the open way with you.

"Know that Mrs. Gaunt said the man would be here with you, and she charged me with a few written lines to him. She would be angry if she knew that I had shown them to any other. Yet I take on me to show them to you, for I believe you are wiser than any of us, if the truth were known. I do therefore entreat you to read these lines, and tell me whether you think the hand that wrote them can have shed the blood of him to whom they are writ.

"I am, madam, with profound respect, your grateful and very humble servant,

"GEORGE NEVILLE."

He very soon received a line in reply, written in a clear and beautiful handwriting:

"Mercy Vint sends you her duty; and she will speak to you at nine of the clock to-morrow morning. Pray for light."

At the appointed time Sir George found her working with her needle. His letter lay on the table before her.

She rose and courtesied to him, and called the servant to take away the child for a while. She went with her to the door, and kissed the bairn several times at parting, as if he was going away for good. "I'm loth to let him go," said she to Neville; "but it weakens a mother's mind to have her babe in the room—takes her attention off each moment. Pray you be seated. Well, sir, I have read those lines of Mistress Gaunt, and wept over them. Methinks I had not done so were they cunningly devised. Alse I lay all night and thought."

"That is just what she does."

"No doubt, sir; and the upshot is, I don't *feel* as if he was dead. Thank God."

"That is something," said Neville. But he could not help thinking it was very little, especially to produce in a court of justice.

"And now," said she, thoughtfully, "you say

that the real Thomas Leicester was seen thereabouts as well as my Thomas Leicester. Then answer me one little question. What had the real Thomas Leicester on his feet that night?"

"Nay, I know not," was the half-careless reply.

"Bethink you. 'Tis a question that must have been often put in your hearing."

"Madam," said Sir George, "our minds were fixed upon the fate of Gaunt. Many did ask how was the peddler armed, but none how was he shod."

"Hath he been seen since?"

"Not he; and that hath an ugly look; for the constables are out after him with hue and cry; but he is not to be found."



[Page 115.]

"Then take my hand, and kneel down with me."

"Begging your pardon, it was never put at all; nor do I see—"

"What, not at the inquest?"

"No."

"That is very strange. What, so many wise heads have bent over this riddle, and not one to ask how was yon peddler shod!"

"Then," said Mercy, "I must e'en answer my own question. I do know how that peddler was shod—WITH HOBNAILED SHOES."

Sir George bounded from his chair. One great ray of daylight broke in upon him.

"Ay," said Mercy, "she was right. Women do see clearer in some things than men. The

pair went from my house to hers: he you call Griffith Gaunt had on a new pair of boots; and, by the same token, 'twas I did pay for them, and there is the receipt in that cupboard: he you call Thomas Leicester went hence in hobnailed shoes. I think the body they found was the body of Thomas Leicester the peddler. May God have mercy on his poor unprepared soul!"

Sir George uttered a joyful exclamation. But the next moment he had a doubt: "Ay, but," said he, "you forget the mole. 'Twas on that they built."

"I forget naught," said Mercy, calmly. "The peddler had a black mole over his left temple. He showed it me in this very room. You have found the body of Thomas Leicester, and Griffith Gaunt is hiding from the law that he hath broken. He is afeared of her and her friends if he shows his face in Cumberland; he is afeared of my folk if he be seen in Lancashire. Ah! Thomas, as if I would let them harm thee!"

Sir George Neville walked to and fro in grand excitement.

"Oh, blessed day that I came hither. Madam, you are an angel. You will save an innocent, broken-hearted lady from death and dishonor. Your good heart and rare wit have read in a moment the dark riddle that hath puzzled a county."

"George," said Mercy, gravely, "you have gotten the wrong end of the stick. The wise in their own conceit are blinded; in Cumberland, where all this befell, they went not to God for light, as you and I did, George."

In saying this she gave him her hand to celebrate their success.

He kissed it devoutly, and owned afterward that it was the proudest moment of his life, when that sweet Puritan gave him her neat hand so cordially, with a pressure so gentle, yet frank.

And now came the question how they were to make a Cumberland jury see this matter as they saw it.

He asked her would she come to the trial as a witness?

At that she drew back with manifest repugnance.

"My shame would be public. I must tell who I am, and what—a ruined woman."

"Say rather an injured saint. You have nothing to be ashamed of. All good men would feel for you."

Mercy shook her head. "Ay, but the women; shame is shame with us; right or wrong goes for little. Nay, I hope to do better for you than that. I must find *him*, and send him to deliver her. 'Tis his only chance of happiness."

She then asked him if he would draw up an advertisement of quite a different kind from those he had described to her.

He assented, and between them they concocted the following:

"If Thomas Leicester, who went from the 'Packhorse' two months ago, will come thither at once, Mercy will be much beholden to him, and tell him strange things that have befallen."

Sir George then, at her request, rode over to Lancaster, and inserted the above in the county paper, and also in a small sheet that was issued in the city three times a week. He had also hand-bills to the same effect printed, and sent

into Cumberland and Westmoreland. Finally, he sent a copy to his man of business in London, with orders to insert it in all the journals.

Then he returned to the "Packhorse," and told Mercy what he had done.

The next day he bade her farewell, and away for Carlisle. It was a two-days' journey. He reached Carlisle in the evening, and went all glowing to Mrs. Gaunt. "Madam," said he, "be of good cheer. I bless the day I went to see her; she is an angel of wit and goodness." He then related to her, in glowing terms, most that had passed between Mercy and him. But, to his surprise, Mrs. Gaunt wore a cold, forbidding air.

"This is all very well," said she. "But 'twill avail me little unless *he* comes before the judge and clears me, and she will never let him do that."

"Ay, that she will—if she can find him."

"If she can find him? How simple you are."

"Nay, madam, not so simple but I can tell a good woman from a bad one, and a true from a false."

"What! when you are in love with her? Not if you were the wisest of your sex."

"In love with her?" cried Sir George; and colored high.

"Ay," said the lady. "Think you I can not tell? Don't deceive yourself. You have gone and fallen in love with her. At your years! Not that 'tis any business of mine."

"Well, madam," said Sir George, stiffly, "say what you please on that score, but at least welcome my good news."

Mrs. Gaunt begged him to excuse her petulance, and thanked him kindly for all he had just done. But the next moment she rose from her chair in great agitation, and burst out, "I'd as lieve die as owe any thing to that woman."

Sir George remonstrated. "Why hate her? She does not hate you."

"Oh yes she does. 'Tis not in nature she should do any other."

"Her acts prove the contrary."

"Her acts! She has *done* nothing but make fair promises, and that has blinded you. Women of this sort are very cunning, and never show their real characters to a man. No more; prithee mention not her name to me. It makes me ill. I know he is with her at this moment. Ah! let me die and be forgotten, since I am no more beloved."

The voice was sad and weary now, and the tears ran fast.

Poor Sir George was moved and melted, and set himself to flatter and console this impracticable lady, who hated her best friend in this sore strait for being what she was herself—a woman, and was much less annoyed at being hanged than at not being loved.

When she was a little calmer he left her and rode off to Houseman. That worthy was delighted. "Get her to swear to those hobnailed shoes," said he, "and we shall shake them." He then let Sir George know that he had obtained private information, which he would use in cross-examining a principal witness for the crown. "However," he added, "do not deceive yourself; nothing can make the prisoner really safe but the appearance of Griffith Gaunt; he has such strong motives for coming to light; he is heir to a fortune, and his wife is accused of murdering him.

The jury will never believe he is alive till they see him. That man's prolonged disappearance is hideous. It turns my blood cold when I think of it."

"Do not despair on that score," said Neville. "I believe our good angel will produce him."

Three days only before the assizes came the long-expected letter from Mercy Vint. Sir George tore it open, but bitter was his disappointment. The letter merely said that Griffith had not appeared in answer to her advertisements, and she was sore grieved and perplexed.

There were two postscripts, each a little piece of paper.

First postscript, in a tremulous hand, "Pray."

Second postscript, in a firm hand, "Drain that water."

Houseman shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "Drain the mere? Let the crown do that. We should but fish up more trouble. And prayer, quo' she! 'Tis not prayers we want, but evidence."

He sent his clerk off to travel post night and day, and subpoena Mercy, and bring her back with him to the trial. She was to have every comfort on the road, and be treated like a duchess.

The evening before the assizes, Mrs. Gaunt's apartments were Mr. Houseman's headquarters, and messages were coming and going all day on matters connected with the defense.

Just at sunset up rattled a post-chaise, and the clerk got out and came haggard and bloodshot before his employer.

"The witness has disappeared, sir. Left home last Tuesday, with her child, and has never been seen nor heard of since."

Here was a terrible blow. They all paled under it; it seriously diminished the chances of an acquittal.

But Mrs. Gaunt bore it nobly. She seemed to rise under it.

She turned to Sir George Neville with a sweet smile. "The noble heart sees base things noble. No wonder, then, that an artful woman deluded you. He has left England with her, and condemned me to the gallows—in cold blood. So be it. I shall defend myself."

She then sat down with Mr. Houseman, and went through the written case he had prepared for her, and showed him notes she had taken of full a hundred criminal trials, great and small.

While they were putting their heads together, Sir George sat in a brown study, and uttered not a word. Presently he got up a little brusquely, and said, "I'm going to Hershaw."

"What! at this time of night? What to do?"

"To obey my orders. To drain the mere."

"And who could have ordered you to drain my mere?"

"Mercy Vint."

Sir George uttered this in a very curious way, half ashamed, half resolute, and retired before Mrs. Gaunt could vent in speech the surprise and indignation that fired her eye.

Houseman implored her not to heed Sir George and his vagaries, but to bend her whole mind on those approved modes of defense with which he had supplied her.

Being now alone with her, he no longer concealed his great anxiety.

"We have lost an invaluable witness in that woman," said he. "I was mad to think she would come."

Mrs. Gaunt shivered with repugnance. "I would not have her come for all the world," said she. "For Heaven's sake, never mention her name to me. I want help from none but friends. Send Mrs. Houseman to me in the morning, and do not distress yourself so. I shall defend myself far better than you think. I have not studied a hundred trials for naught."

Thus the prisoner cheered up her attorney, and soon after insisted on his going home to bed, for she saw he was worn out by his exertions.

And now she was alone.

All was silent.

A few short hours, and she was to be tried for her life—tried, not by the All-wise Judge, but by fallible men, and under a system most unfavorable to the accused.

Worse than all this, she was a Papist; and, as ill luck would have it, since her imprisonment an alarm was raised that the Pretender meditated another invasion. This report had set juries very much against all the Romanists in the country, and had already perverted justice in one or two cases, especially in the North.

Mrs. Gaunt knew all this, and trembled at the peril to come.

She spent the early part of the night in studying her defense. Then she laid it quite aside, and prayed long and fervently.

Toward morning she fell asleep from exhaustion.

When she awoke, Mrs. Houseman was sitting by her bedside, looking at her, and crying.

They were soon clasped in each other's arms, condoling.

But presently Houseman came, and took his wife away rather angrily.

Mrs. Gaunt was prevailed on to eat a little toast and drink a glass of wine, and then she sat waiting her dreadful summons.

She waited and waited, until she became impatient to face her danger.

But there were two petty larcenies on before her. She had to wait.

At last, about noon, came a message to say that the grand jury had found a true bill against her.

"Then may God forgive them!" said she.

Soon afterward she was informed her time drew very near.

She made her toilet carefully, and passed with her attendant into a small room under the court.

Here she had to endure another chilling wait, and in a sombre room.

Presently she heard a voice above her cry out, "The King *versus* Catharine Gaunt."

Then she was beckoned to.

She mounted some steps, badly lighted, and found herself in the glare of day, and greedy eyes, in the felon's dock.

In a matter entirely strange, we seldom know beforehand what we can do, and how we shall carry ourselves. Mrs. Gaunt no sooner set her foot in that dock, and saw the awful front of Justice face to face, than her tremors abated, and all her powers awoke, and she thrilled with love of life, and bristled with all those fine arts of defense that nature lends to superior women.

She entered on that defense before she spoke a word, for she attacked the prejudices of the court by deportment.

She courtied reverently to the judge, and contrived to make her reverence seem a willing homage, unmixed with fear.

She cast her eyes round, and saw the court thronged with ladies and gentlemen she knew. In a moment she read in their faces that only two or three were on her side. She bowed to those only, and they returned her courtesy. This gave an impression (a false one) that the gentry sympathized with her.

After a little murmur of functionaries, the Clerk of Arraignment turned to the prisoner, and said, in a loud voice, "Catharine Gaunt, hold up thy hand."

She held up her hand, and he recited the indictment, which charged that, not having the fear of God before her eyes, but being moved by the instigation of the devil, she had, on the fifteenth of October, in the tenth year of the reign of his present majesty, aided and abetted one Thomas Leicester in an assault upon one Griffith Gaunt, Esq., and him, the said Griffith Gaunt, did with force and arms assassinate and do to death, against the peace of our said lord the king, his crown and dignity.

After reading the indictment, the Clerk of Arraignment turned to the prisoner, "How sayest thou, Catharine Gaunt, art thou guilty of the felony and murder whereof thou standest indicted—or not guilty?"

"I am not guilty."

"Culprit, how wilt thou be tried?"

"Culprit I am none, but only accused: I will be tried by God and my country."

"God send thee a good deliverance."

Mr. Whitworth, the junior counsel for the crown, then rose to open the case; but the prisoner, with a pale face, but most courteous demeanor, begged his leave to make a previous motion to the court. Mr. Whitworth bowed and sat down. "My lord," said she, "I have first a favor to ask, and that favor, methinks, you will grant, since it is but justice—impartial justice. My accuser, I hear, has two counsel, both learned and able. I am but a woman, and no match for their skill; therefore I beg your lordship to allow me counsel on my defense, to matter of fact as well as of law. I know this is not usual, but it is just; and I am informed it has sometimes been granted in trials of life and death, and that your lordship hath the power, if you have the will, to do me so much justice."

The judge looked toward Mr. Sergeant Wiltshire, who was the leader on the other side. He rose instantly and replied to this purpose: "The prisoner is misinformed. The truth is, that from time immemorial, and down to the other day, a person indicted for a capital offense was never allowed counsel at all, except to matters of law, and these must be started by himself. By recent practice, the rule hath been so far relaxed that counsel have sometimes been permitted to examine and cross-examine witnesses for a prisoner, but never to make observations on the evidence, nor to draw inferences from it to the point in issue."

Mrs. Gaunt. So, then, if I be sued for a small sum of money, I may have skilled orators to defend me against their like, but if I be sued for

my life and honor, I may not oppose skill to skill, but must stand here a child against you that are masters. 'Tis a monstrous iniquity, and you yourself, sir, will not deny it.

Serg't. Wiltshire. Madam, permit me: whether it be a hardship to deny full counsel to prisoners in criminal cases, I shall not pretend to say; but if it be, 'tis a hardship of the law's making, and not of mine, nor of my lord's, and none have suffered by it (at least in our day) but those who had broken the law.

The sergeant then stopped a minute and whispered with his junior, after which he turned to the judge: "My lord, we, that are of counsel for the crown, desire to do nothing that is hard where a person's life is at stake. We yield to the prisoner any indulgence for which your lordship can find a precedent in your reading, but no more; and so we leave the matter to you."

The Clerk of Arraignment. Crier, proclaim silence. The Crier. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! His majesty's justices do straitly charge all manner of persons to keep silence on pain of imprisonment.

The Judge. Prisoner, what my brother Wiltshire says, the law is clear in: there is no precedent for what you ask, and the contrary practice stares us in the face for centuries. What seems to you a partial practice, and, to be frank, some learned persons are of your mind, must be set against this, that in capital cases the burden of proof lies on the crown and not on the accused. Also it is my duty to give you all the assistance I can, and that I shall do. Thus then it is: you can be allowed counsel to examine your own witnesses, and cross-examine the witnesses for the crown, and speak to points of law, to be started by yourself, but no farther.

He then asked her what gentleman there present he should assign to her for counsel.

Her reply to this inquiry took the whole court by surprise, and made her solicitor, Houseman, very miserable. "None, my lord," said she. "Half justice is injustice, and I will lend it no color. I will not set able men to fight for me with their hands tied, against men as able whose hands be free. Counsel, on terms so partial, I will have none. My counsel shall be three, and no more—yourself, my lord—my innocence—and the Lord God Omniscent."

These words, grandly uttered, caused a dead silence in the court, but only for a few moments. It was broken by the loud mechanical voice of the crier, who proclaimed silence, and then called the names of the jury that were to try this cause.

Mrs. Gaunt listened keenly to the names—familiar and bourgeois names, that now seemed regal, for they who owned them held her life in their hands.

Each jurymen was sworn in the grand old form, now slightly curtailed.

"Joseph King, look upon the prisoner. You shall well and truly try, and true deliverance make, between our sovereign lord the king and the prisoner at the bar, whom you shall have in charge, and a true verdict give, according to the evidence. So help you God."

Mr. Whitworth, for the crown, then opened the case, but did little more than translate the indictment into more rational language.

He sat down, and Sergeant Wiltshire addressed the court somewhat after this fashion:

"May it please your lordship, and you, gen-

tle men of the jury, this is a case of great expectation and importance. The prisoner at the bar, a gentleman by birth and education, and, as you must have already perceived, by breeding also, stands indicted for no less a crime than murder.

"I need not paint to you the heinousness of this crime: you have but to consult your own breasts. Who ever saw the ghastly corpse of the victim weltering in its blood, and did not feel his own blood run cold through his veins? Has the murderer fled? With what eagerness do we pursue! with what zeal apprehend! with what joy do we bring him to justice! Even the dreadful sentence of death does not shock us when pronounced upon him; we hear it with solemn satisfaction, and acknowledge the justice of the divine sentence, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.'

"But, if this be the case in every common murder, what shall be thought of her who has murdered her husband? the man in whose arms she has lain, and whom she has sworn at God's altar to love and cherish. Such a murderer is a robber as well as an assassin; for she robs her own children of their father, that tender parent who can never be replaced in this world.

"Gentlemen, it will, I fear, be proved that the prisoner at the bar hath been guilty of murder in this high degree; and, though I will endeavor rather to extenuate than to aggravate, yet I trust (sic) I have such a history to open as will shock the ears of all who hear me.

"Mr. Griffith Gaunt, the unfortunate deceased, was a man of descent and worship. As to his character, it was inoffensive; he was known as a worthy, kindly gentleman, deeply attached to her who now stands accused of his murder. They lived happily together for some years; but, unfortunately, there was a thorn in the rose of their wedded life; he was of the Church of England; she was, and is, a Roman Catholic. This led to disputes; and no wonder, since the same unhappy difference hath more than once embroiled a nation, let alone a single family.

"Well, gentlemen, about a year ago there was a more violent quarrel than usual between the deceased and the prisoner at the bar, and the deceased left his home for several months.

"He returned upon a certain day in this year, and a reconciliation, real or apparent, took place. He left home again soon afterward, but only for a short period. On the 15th of last October he suddenly returned for good, as he intended; and here begins the tragedy, to which what I have hitherto related was but the prologue.

"Scarce an hour before he came, one Thomas Leicester entered the house. Now this Thomas Leicester was a creature of the prisoner's. He had been her gamekeeper, and was now a peddler. It was the prisoner who set him up as a peddler, and purchased the wares to start him in his trade.

"Gentlemen, this peddler, as I shall prove, was concealed in the house when the deceased arrived. One Caroline Ryder, who is the prisoner's gentlewoman, was the person who first informed her of Leicester's arrival, and it seems she was much moved; Mrs. Ryder will tell you she fell into hysterics. But, soon after, her husband's arrival was announced, and then the passion was of a very different kind. So violent

was her rage against this unhappy man that, for once, she forgot all prudence, and threatened his life before a witness. Yes, gentlemen, we shall prove that this gentlewoman, who in appearance and manners might grace a court, was so transported out of her usual self that she held up a knife—a knife, gentlemen, and vowed to put it into her husband's heart. And this was no mere temporary ebullition of wrath; we shall see presently that, long after she had time to cool, she repeated this menace to the unfortunate man's face. The first threat, however, was uttered in her own bedroom, before her confidential servant, Caroline Ryder aforesaid. But now the scene shifts. She has, to all appearance, recovered herself, and sits smiling at the head of her table; for, you must know, she entertained company that night, persons of the highest standing in the county.

"Presently her husband, all unconscious of the terrible sentiments she entertained toward him, and the fearful purpose she had announced, enters the room, makes obeisance to his guests, and goes to take his wife's hand.

"What does she? She draws back with so strange a look and such forbidding words that the company were disconcerted. Consternation fell on all present; and, ere long, they made their excuses and left the house. Thus the prisoner was left alone with her husband. But, meantime, curiosity had been excited by her strange conduct, and some of the servants, with foreboding hearts, listened at the door of the dining-room. What did they hear, gentlemen? A furious quarrel, in which, however, the deceased was comparatively passive, and the prisoner again threatened his life with vehemence. Her passion, it is clear, had not cooled.

"Now it may fairly be alleged on behalf of the prisoner that the witnesses for the crown were on one side of the door, the prisoner and the deceased on the other, and that such evidence should be received with caution. I grant this, where it is not sustained by other circumstances or by direct proofs. Let us, then, give the prisoner the benefit of this doubt, and let us inquire how the deceased himself understood her; he who not only heard the words and the accents, but saw the looks, whatever they were, that accompanied them.

"Gentlemen, he was a man of known courage and resolution, yet he was found after this terrible interview much cowed and dejected. He spoke to Mrs. Ryder of his death as an event not far distant, and so went to his bedroom in a melancholy and foreboding state: and where was that bedroom? He was thrust by his wife's orders into a small chamber, and not allowed to enter hers; he, the master of the house, her husband and her lord.

"But his interpretation of the prisoner's words did not end there. He left us a farther comment by his actions next ensuing. He dared not (I beg pardon, this is my inference; receive it as such), he *did* not remain in that house a single night. He bolted his chamber-door inside; and in the dead of night, notwithstanding the fatigues of the day's journey (for he had ridden some distance), he let himself out by the window, and reached the ground safely, though it was a height of fourteen feet; a leap, gentlemen, that few of us would venture to take. But what will not

men risk when destruction is at their heels? He did not wait even to saddle his horse, but fled on foot. Unhappy man, he fled from danger and met his death.

"From the hour when he went up to bed none of the inmates of the house ever saw Griffith Gaunt alive; but one Thomas Hayes, a laborer, saw him walking in a certain direction at one o'clock that morning, and behind him, gentlemen, there walked another man.

"Who was that other man?"

"When I have told you (and this is an essential feature of the case) how the prisoner was employed during the time that her husband lay quaking in his little room, waiting an opportunity to escape—when I tell you this, I fear you will divine who it was that followed the deceased, and for what purpose.

"Gentlemen, when the prisoner had threatened her husband in person, as I have described, she retired to her own room, but not to sleep. She ordered her maid, Mrs. Ryder, to bring Thomas Leicester to her chamber. Yes, gentlemen, she received this peddler at midnight in her bed-chamber.

"Now an act so strange as this admits, I think, of but two interpretations. Either she had a guilty amour with this fellow, or she had some extraordinary need of his services. Her whole character, by consent of the witnesses, renders it very improbable that she would descend to a low amour. Moreover, she acted too publicly in the matter. The man, as we know, was her tool—her creature: she had bought his wares for him, and set him up as a peddler. She openly summoned him to her presence, and kept him there about half an hour.

"He went from her, and very soon after is seen by Thomas Hayes following Griffith Gaunt—at one o'clock in the morning—that Griffith Gaunt, who, after that hour, was never seen alive.

"Gentlemen, up to this point the evidence is clear, connected, and cogent; but it rarely happens in cases of murder that any human eye sees the very blow struck. The penalty is too severe for such an act to be done in the presence of an eye-witness; and not one murderer in ten could be convicted without the help of circumstantial evidence.

"The next link, however, is taken up by an ear-witness, and, in some cases, the ear is even better than the eye; for instance, as to the discharge of fire-arms; for, by the eye alone, we could not positively tell whether a pistol had gone off or had but flashed in the pan. Well, then, gentlemen, a few minutes after Mr. Gaunt was last seen alive, which was by Thomas Hayes, Mrs. Ryder, who had retired to her room, heard the said Gaunt distinctly cry for help; she also heard a pistol-shot discharged. This took place by the side of a lake or large pond near the house, called 'the mere.' Mrs. Ryder alarmed the house, and she and the other servants proceeded to her master's room: they found it bolted from the inside. They broke it open. Mr. Gaunt had escaped by the window, as I have already told you.

"Presently in comes the prisoner from out of doors. This is at one o'clock in the morning. Now she appears to have seen at once that she must explain her being abroad at that time, so

she told Mrs. Ryder that she had been out—praying."

(Here some people laughed harshly, but were threatened severely, and silenced.)

"Is that credible? Do people go out of doors at one o'clock in the morning to pray? Nay; but I fear it was to do an act that years of prayer and penitence can not efface.

"From that moment Mr. Gaunt was seen no more among living men. And what made his disappearance the more mysterious was that he had actually at this time just inherited largely from his namesake, Mr. Gaunt of Coggleswade, and his own interest, and that of the other legatees, required his immediate presence. Mr. Atkins, the testator's solicitor, advertised for this unfortunate gentleman, but he did not appear to claim his fortune. Then plain men began to put this and that together, and cried out 'foul play!'

"Justice was set in motion at last, but embarrassed by the circumstance that the body of the deceased could not be found.

"At last Mr. Atkins, the solicitor, being unable to get the estate I have mentioned administered for want of proof of Griffith Gaunt's decease, entered heartily into this affair on mere civil grounds. He asked the prisoner, before several witnesses, if she would permit him to drag that piece of water by the side of which Mr. Gaunt was heard to cry for help, and, after that, seen no more.

"The prisoner did not reply; but Mr. Houseman, her solicitor, a very worthy man, who has, I believe, or had up to that moment, a sincere conviction of her innocence, answered for her, and told Mr. Atkins he was welcome to drag or drain it. Then the prisoner said nothing. She fainted away.

"After this, you may imagine with what expectation the water was dragged. Gentlemen, after hours of fruitless labor, a body was found.

"But here an unforeseen circumstance befriended the prisoner. It seems that piece of water swarms with enormous pike and other ravenous fish. These had so horribly mutilated the deceased that neither form nor feature remained to swear by; and as the law wisely and humanely demands that in these cases a body shall be identified beyond doubt, justice bade fair to be baffled again. But lo! as often happens in case of murder, Providence interposed and pointed with unerring finger to a slight but infallible mark. The deceased gentleman was known to have a large mole over his left temple. It had been noticed by his servants and his neighbors. Well, gentlemen, the greedy fish had spared this mole—spared it perhaps by His command who bade the whale swallow Jonah, yet not destroy him. There it was, clear and infallible. It was examined by several witnesses; it was recognized; it completed that chain of evidence, some of it direct, some of it circumstantial, which I have laid before you very briefly, and every part of which I shall now support by credible witnesses."

He called thirteen witnesses, including Mr. Atkins, Thomas Hayes, Jane Bannister, Caroline Ryder, and others, and their evidence in chief bore out every positive statement the counsel had made.

In cross-examining these witnesses Mrs. Gaunt took a line that agreeably surprised the court.

It was not for nothing she had studied a hundred trials with a woman's observation and patient docility. She had found out how badly people plead their own causes, and had noticed the reasons; one of which is that they say too much, and stray from the point. The line she took, with one exception, was keen brevity.

She cross-examined Thomas Hayes as follows:

CHAPTER XLII.

"You say the peddler was a hundred yards behind my husband. Which of the two men was walking fastest?"

Thomas Hayes considered a moment. "Well, I think the squire was walking rather the smartest of the two."

"Did the peddler seem likely to overtake him?"

"Nay. Ye see, dame, squire he walked straight on; but the peddler he took both sides of the road at onst, as the saying is."

The Prisoner. Forgive me, Thomas, but I don't know what you mean.

Hayes (compassionately). How should ye? You are never the worse for liquor, the likes of you.

The Prisoner (very keenly). Oh, he was in liquor, was he?

Hayes. Come, dame, you do brew good ale at Hernshaw Castle. Ye needn't go to deny that; for, Lord knows, 'tis no sin, and a poor fellow may be jolly, yet not to say drunk.

The Judge (sternly). Witness, attend, and answer directly.

The Prisoner. Nay, my lord, 'tis a plain country body, and means no ill. Good Thomas, be so much my friend as to answer plainly. Was the man drunk or sober?

Hayes. All I know is, he went from one side of the road to t'other.

The Prisoner. Thomas Hayes, as you hope to be saved eternally, was the peddler drunk or sober?

Hayes. Well, if I must tell on my neighbor or else be damned, then that there peddler was as drunk as a lord.

Here, notwithstanding the nature of the trial, the laughter was irrepressible, and Mrs. Gaunt sat quietly down (for she was allowed a seat), and said no more.

To the surgeon, who had examined the body officially, she put this question, "Did you find any signs of violence?"

The Surgeon. None whatever; but then there was nothing to go by, except the head and the bones.

The Prisoner. Have you experience in this kind? I mean, have you inspected murdered bodies?

The Surgeon. Yes.

The Prisoner. How many?

The Surgeon. Two before this.

The Prisoner. Oh! pray, pray, do not say "before this:" I have great hopes no murder at all hath been committed here. Let us keep to plain cases. Please you describe the injuries in these two undoubted cases.

The Surgeon. In Wellyn's the skull was fractured in two places. In Sherrett's the right arm was broken, and there were some contusions on

the head; but the cause of death was a stab that penetrated the lungs.

The Prisoner. Suppose Wellyn's murderers had thrown his body into the water, and the fishes had so mutilated it as they have this one, could you by your art have detected the signs of violence?

The Surgeon. Certainly. The man's skull was fractured. Wellyn's, I mean.

The Prisoner. I put the same question with regard to Sherrett's.

The Surgeon. I can not answer it: here the lungs were devoured by the fishes: no signs of lesion can be detected in an organ that has ceased to exist.

The Prisoner. This is too partial. Why select one injury out of several? What I ask is this: could you have detected violence in Sherrett's case, although the fishes had eaten the flesh of his body?

The Surgeon. I answer that the minor injuries of Sherrett would have been equally perceptible; to wit, the bruises on the head, and the broken arm, but not the perforation of the lungs; and that it was killed the man.

Prisoner. Then, so far as you know, and can swear, about murder, more blows have always been struck than one, and some of the blows struck in Sherrett's case, and Wellyn's, would have left traces that fishes' teeth could not efface?

The Surgeon. That is so, if I am to be peevishly confined to my small and narrow experience of murdered bodies. But my general knowledge of the many ways in which life may be taken by violence—

The judge stopped him, and said that, in a case of blood, that could hardly be admitted as evidence against his actual experience.

The prisoner put a drawing of the castle, the mere, and the bridge, into the witnesses' hands, and elicited that it was correct, and also the distances marked on it. They had, in fact, been measured exactly for her.

The hobnailed shoes were produced, and she made some use of them, particularly in cross-examining Jane Bannister.

Prisoner. Look at those shoes. Saw you ever the like on Mr. Gaunt's feet?

Jane. That I never did dame.

Prisoner. What, not when he came into the kitchen on the 15th of October?

Jane. Nay, he was booted. By the same token, I saw the boy a cleaning of them for supper.

Prisoner. Those boots, when you broke into his room, did you find them?

Jane. Nay, when the man went, his boots went, as reason was. We found naught of his but a soiled glove.

Prisoner. Had the peddler boots on?

Jane. Alas! who ever see'd a booted peddler?

Prisoner. Had he these very shoes on? Look at them.

Jane. I couldn't say for that. He had shoon, for they did properly clatter on my bricks.

The Judge. Clatter on her bricks! What does she mean?

Prisoner. I think she means on the floor of her kitchen. 'Tis a brick floor, if I remember right.

The Judge. Good woman, say, is that what you mean?

Jane. Ay, an't please you, my lord.

Prisoner. Had the peddler a mole on his forehead?

Jane. Not that I know on. I never took so much notice of the man. But la! dame, now I look at you, I don't believe you was ever the one to murder our master.

Wiltshire. We don't want your opinion. Confine yourself to facts.

Prisoner. You heard me rating my husband on that night; what was it I said about the constables—do you remember?

Jane. La! dame, I wouldn't ask that if I was in your place.

Prisoner. I am much obliged to you for your advice, but answer me—truly.

Jane. Well, if you will have it, I think you said they should be here in the morning. But, indeed, good gentlemen, her bark was always worse than her bite, poor soul!

The Judge. Here. That meant at Hernshaw Castle, I presume.

Jane. Ay, my lord, an' if it please your lordship's honor's worship.

Mrs. Gaunt, husbanding the patience of the court, put no questions at all to several witnesses, but she cross-examined Mrs. Ryder very closely. This was necessary, for Ryder was a fatal witness. Her memory had stored every rash and hasty word the poor lady had uttered, and, influenced either by animosity or prejudice, she put the worst color on every suspicious circumstance. She gave her damnable evidence neatly and clearly, and with a seeming candor and regret that disarmed suspicion.

When her examination in chief concluded, there was but one opinion among the bar and the auditors in general, viz., that the maid had hung the mistress.

Mrs. Gaunt herself felt she had a terrible antagonist to deal with, and, when she rose to cross-examine her, she looked paler than she had done all through the trial.

She rose, but seemed to ask herself how to begin; and her pallor and her hesitation, while they excited some little sympathy, confirmed the unfavorable impression. She fixed her eyes upon the witness, as if to discover where she was most vulnerable. Mrs. Ryder returned her gaze calmly. The court was hushed, for it was evident a duel was coming between two women of no common ability.

The opening rather disappointed expectation. Mrs. Gaunt seemed, by her manner, desirous to propitiate the witness.

Prisoner (very civilly). You say you brought Thomas Leicester to my bedroom on that terrible night?

Ryder (civilly). Yes, madam.

Prisoner. And you say he staid there half an hour?

Ryder. Yes, madam, he did.

Prisoner. May I inquire how you know he staid just half an hour?

Ryder. My watch told me that, madam. I brought him to you at a quarter past eleven, and you did not ring for me till a quarter to twelve.

Prisoner. And when I did ring for you, what then?

Ryder. I came and took the man away, by your orders.

Prisoner. At a quarter to twelve?

Ryder. At a quarter to twelve.

Prisoner. This Leicester was a lover of yours?

Ryder. Not he.

Prisoner. Oh fie! Why, he offered you marriage; it went so far as that.

Ryder. Oh, that was before you set him up peddler.

Prisoner. 'Twas so; but he was single for your sake, and he renewed his offer that very night. Come, do not forswear yourself about a trifle.

Ryder. Trifle, indeed! Why, if he did, what has that to do with the murder? You'll do yourself no good, madam, by going about so.

Wiltshire. Really, madam, this is beside the mark.

Prisoner. If so, it can do your case no harm. My lord, you did twice interrupt the learned counsel, and forbade him to lead his witnesses; I not once, for I am for stopping no mouths, but sifting all to the bottom. Now I implore you to let me have fair play in my turn, and an answer from this slippery witness.

The Judge. Prisoner, I do not quite see your drift, but God forbid you should be hampered in your defense. Witness, by virtue of your oath, reply directly. Did this peddler offer you marriage that night after he left the prisoner?

Ryder. My lord, he did.

Prisoner. And confided to you he had orders to kill Mr. Gaunt?

Ryder. Not he, madam; that was not the way to win me.

Prisoner. What! did not his terrible purpose peep out all the time he was making love to you?

No reply.

Prisoner. You had the kitchen to your two selves? Come, don't hesitate.

Ryder. The other servants were gone to bed, you kept the man so late.

Prisoner. Oh, I mean no reflection on your prudence. You went out of doors with your woer, just to see him off?

Ryder. Not I. What for? I had nobody to make away with. I just opened the door for him, bolted it after him, and went straight to my bedroom.

Prisoner. How long had you been there when you heard the cry for help?

Ryder. Scarce ten minutes. I had not taken my stays off.

Prisoner. If you and Thomas Hayes speak true, that gives half an hour you were making love with the murderer after he left me. Am I correct?

The witness now saw whither she had been led, and changed her manner. She became sullen, and watched an opportunity to stab.

Prisoner. Had he a mole on his brow?

Ryder. Not that I know of.

Prisoner. Why, where were your eyes, then, when the murderer saluted you at parting?

Ryder's eyes flashed; but she felt her temper tried, and governed it all the more severely. She treated the question with silent contempt.

Prisoner. But you pass for a discreet woman; perhaps you looked modestly down when the assassin saluted you?

Ryder. If he saluted me, perhaps I did.

Prisoner. In that case you could not see his mole; but you must have noticed his shoes.

Were these the shoes he wore? Look at them well.

Ryder (after inspecting them). I do not recognize them.

Prisoner. Will you swear these were not the shoes he had on?

Ryder. How can I swear that? I know nothing about the man's shoes. If you please, my lord, am I to be kept here all day with her foolish, trifling questions?

The Judge. All day, and all night too, if justice requires it. The law is not swift to shed blood.

Prisoner. My lord and the gentlemen of the jury were here before you, and will be kept here after you. Prithce attend. Look at that drawing of *Hernshaw Castle* and *Hernshaw Mere*. Now take this pencil and mark your bedroom on the drawing.

The pencil was taken from the prisoner and handed to *Ryder*. She waited like a cat till it came close to her, then recoiled with an admirable scream. "Me handle a thing hot from the hand of a murderess! It makes me tremble all over."

This cruel stab affected the prisoner visibly. She put her hand to her bosom, and with tears in her eyes faltered out a request to the judge that she might sit down a minute.

The Judge. To be sure you may. And you, my good woman, must not run before the court. How do you know what evidence she may have in store? At present we have only heard one side. Be more moderate.

The prisoner rose promptly to her feet. "My lord, I welcome the insult that has disgusted your lordship and the gentlemen of the jury, and won me those good words of comfort." To *Ryder*—"What sort of a night was it?"

Ryder. Very little moon, but a clear, starry night.

Prisoner. Could you see the mere, and the banks?

Ryder. Nay, but so much of it as faced my window.

Prisoner. Have you marked your window?

Ryder. I have.

Prisoner. Now mark the place where you heard Mr. Gaunt cry for help.

Ryder. 'Twas about here—under these trees. And that is why I could not see him, along of the shadow.

Prisoner. Possibly. Did you see me on that side the mere.

Ryder. No.

Prisoner. What colored dress had I on at that time?

Ryder. White satin.

Prisoner. Then you could have seen me, even among the trees, had I been on that side the mere?

Ryder. I can't say. However, I never said you were on the very spot where the deed was done, but you were out of doors.

Prisoner. How do you know that?

Ryder. Why, you told me so yourself.

Prisoner. Then that is my evidence, not yours. Swear to no more than you know. Had my husband, to your knowledge, a reason for absconding suddenly?

Ryder. Yes, he had.

Prisoner. What was it?

Ryder. Fear of you.

Prisoner. Nay, I mean, had he not something to fear—something quite different from that I am charged with?

Ryder. You know best, madam. I would gladly serve you, but I can not guess what you are driving at.

The prisoner was taken aback by this impudent reply. She hesitated to force her servant to expose a husband whom she believed to be living, and her hesitation looked like discomfiture, and *Ryder* was victorious in that encounter.

By this time they were both thoroughly embittered, and it was war to the knife.

Prisoner. You listened to our unhappy quarrel that night?

Ryder. Quarrel! madam, 'twas all on one side.

Prisoner. How did you understand what I said to him about the constables?

Ryder. Constables! I never heard you say the word.

Prisoner. Oh!

Ryder. Neither when you threatened him with your knife to me, nor when you threatened him to his face.

Prisoner. Take care: you forget that *Jane Bannister* heard me; was her ear nearer the key-hole than yours?

Ryder. *Jane!* she is a simpleton. You could make her think she heard any thing. I noticed you put the words in her mouth.

Prisoner. God forgive you, you naughty woman. You had better have spoken the truth.

Ryder. My lord, if you please, am I to be mis-called—by a murderess?

The Judge. Come, come, this is no place for recrimination.

The prisoner now stooped and examined her papers, and took a distinct line of cross-examination.

Prisoner (with apparent carelessness). At all events, you are a virtuous woman, Mrs. *Ryder*?

Ryder. Yes, madam, as virtuous as yourself, to say the least.

Prisoner (still more carelessly). Married or single?

Ryder. Single, and like to be.

Prisoner. Yes, if I remember right, I made a point of that before I engaged you as my maid.

Ryder. I believe the question was put.

Prisoner. Here is the answer in your handwriting. Is not that your handwriting?

Ryder (after inspecting it). It is.

Prisoner. You came highly recommended by your last mistress, a certain Mrs. *Hamilton*. Here is her letter, describing you as a model.

Ryder. Well, madam, hitherto I have given satisfaction to all my mistresses, Mrs. *Hamilton* among the rest. My character does not rest on her word only, I hope.

Prisoner. Excuse me; I engaged you on her word alone. Now who is this Mrs. *Hamilton*?

Ryder. A worshipful lady I served for eight months before I came to you. She went abroad, or I should be with her now.

Prisoner. Now cast your eye over this paper. It was the copy of a marriage certificate between *Thomas Edwards* and *Caroline Plunkett*.

"Who is this *Caroline Plunkett*?"

Ryder turned very pale, and made no reply.

"I ask you who is this *Caroline Plunkett*?"

Ryder (faintly). Myself.

The Judge. Why, you said you were single!
Ryder. So I am—as good as single. My husband and me we parted eight years ago, and I have never seen him since.

Prisoner. Was it quite eight years ago?

Ryder. Nearly; 'twas in May, 1739.

Prisoner. But you have lived with him since?

Ryder. Never, upon my soul.

Prisoner. When was your child born?

Ryder. My child! I have none.

Prisoner. In January, 1743, you left a baby at Biggleswade, with a woman called Church—did you not?

Ryder (panting). Of course I did. It was my sister's.

Prisoner. Do you mean to call God to witness that child was not yours?

Ryder hesitated.

Prisoner. Will you swear Mrs. Church did not see you nurse that child in secret, and weep over it?

At this question the perspiration stood visible on *Ryder's* brow, her cheeks were ghastly, and her black eyes roved like some wild animal's round the court. She saw her own danger, and had no means of measuring her inquisitor's information.

"My lord, have pity on me. I was betrayed, abandoned. Why am I so tormented? I have not committed murder." So, catlike, she squealed and scratched at once.

Prisoner. What! to swear away an innocent life, is not that murder?

The Judge. Prisoner, we make allowances for your sex and your peril, but you must not remark on the evidence at present. Examine as severely as you will, but abstain from comment till you address the jury on your defense.

Sergeant Wiltshire. My lord, I submit that this line of examination is barbarous, and travels out of the case entirely.

Prisoner. Not so, Mr. Sergeant. 'Tis done by advice of an able lawyer. My life is in peril unless I shake this witness's credit. To that end I show you she is incontinent, and practised in falsehood. Unchastity has been held in these courts to disqualify a female witness—hath it not, my lord?

The Judge. Hardly. But to disparage her evidence it has. And wisely; for she who loses her virtue enters on a life of deceit, and lying is a habit that spreads from one thing to many. Much wisdom there is in ancient words. Our forefathers taught us to call a virtuous woman an honest woman, and the law does but follow in that track, still, however, leaving much to the discretion of the jury.

Prisoner. I would show her more mercy than she has shown to me, therefore I leave that matter. Witness, be so good as to examine Mrs. Hamilton's letter, and compare it with your own. The 'y's' and the 's's' are peculiar in both, and yet the same. Come, confess; Mrs. Hamilton's is a forgery. You wrote it. Be pleased to hand both letters up to my lord to compare—the disguise is but thin.

Ryder. Forgery there was none. There is no Mrs. Hamilton. (She burst into tears.) I had my child to provide for, and no man to help me! What was I to do? A servant must live.

Prisoner. Then why not let her mistress live, whose bread she has eaten? My lord, shall not

this false witness be sent hence to prison for perjury?

Wiltshire. Certainly not. What woman on earth is expected to reveal her own shame upon oath? 'Twas not fair nor human to put such questions. Come, madam, leave torturing this poor creature. Show some mercy; you may need it yourself.

The Prisoner. Sir, 'tis not mercy I ask, but justice according to law. But, since you do me the honor to make me a request, I will comply, and ask her but one question more. Describe my apartment into which you showed Thomas Leicester that night. Begin at the outer door.

Ryder. First there is the ante-room; then the bondoir; then there's your bed-chamber.

Prisoner. Into which of those three did you show Thomas Leicester?

Ryder. Into the anteroom.

Prisoner. Then why did you say it was in my chamber I entertained him?

Ryder. Madam, I meant no more than that it was your private apartment up stairs.

Prisoner. You contrived to make the gentlemen think otherwise.

The Judge. That you did. 'Tis down in my notes that she received the peddler in her bed-chamber.

Ryder (sobbing). God is my witness I did not mean to mislead your lordship, and I ask my lady's pardon for not being more exact in that particular.

At this the prisoner bowed to the judge, and sat down with one victorious flash of her gray eye at the witness, who was in an abject condition of fear, and hung all about the witness-box limp as a wet towel.

Sergeant Wiltshire saw she was so thoroughly cowed she would be apt to truckle, and soften her evidence to propitiate the prisoner, so he asked her but one question.

"Were you and the prisoner on good terms?"

Ryder. On the best of terms. She was always a good and liberal mistress to me.

Wiltshire. I will not prolong your sufferings. You may go down.

The Judge. But you will not leave the court till this trial is ended. I have grave doubts whether I ought not to commit you.

Unfortunately for the prisoner, *Ryder* was not the last witness for the crown. The others that followed were so manifestly honest that it would have been impolitic to handle them severely. The prisoner, therefore, put very few questions to them, and when the last witness went down the case looked very formidable.

The evidence for the crown being now complete, the judge retired for some refreshment, and the court buzzed like a hum of bees. Mrs. Gaunt's lips and throat were parched, and her heart quaked.

A woman of quite the lower order thrust forth a great arm and gave her an orange. Mrs. Gaunt thanked her sweetly, and the juice relieved her throat.

Also this bit of sympathy was of good omen, and did her heart good.

She buried her face in her hands, and collected all her powers for the undertaking before her. She had noted down the exact order of her topics, but no more.

The judge returned; the crier demanded si-

lence; and the prisoner rose, and turned her eyes modestly but steadily upon those who held her life in their hands; and, true to the wisdom of her sex, the first thing she aimed at was—to please.

“My lord, and you, gentlemen of the jury, I am now to reply to a charge of murder, founded on a little testimony, and a good deal of false, but, I must needs say, reasonable conjecture.”

“I am innocent; but, unlike other innocent persons who have stood here before me, I have no man to complain of.

“The magistrates who committed me proceeded with due caution and humanity; they weighed my hitherto unspotted reputation, and were in no hurry to prejudge me; here, in this court, I have met with much forbearance; the learned counsel for the crown has made me groan under his abilities; that was his duty; but he said from the first he would do nothing hard, and he has kept his word. Often he might have stopped me; I saw it in his face; but, being a gentleman and a Christian, as well as a learned lawyer, methinks he said to himself, ‘This is a poor gentlewoman pleading for her life; let her have some little advantage.’ As for my lord, he has promised to be my counsel, so far as his high station, and duty to the crown, admit, and he has supported and consoled me more than once with words of justice, that would not, I think, have encouraged a guilty person, but have comforted and sustained me beyond expression. So, then, I stand here, the victim, not of man’s injustice, but of deceitful appearances, and of honest, but hasty and loose conjectures.

“These conjectures I shall now sift, and hope to show you how hollow they are.

“Gentlemen, in every disputed matter, the best way, I am told, is to begin by settling what both parties are agreed in, and so to narrow the matter. To use that way, then, I do heartily agree with the learned counsel that murder is a heinous crime, and that, black as it is at the best, yet it is still more detestable when ’tis a wife that murders her husband, and robs her child of a parent who can never be replaced.

“I also agree with him that circumstantial evidence is often sufficient to convict a murderer; and, indeed, were it not so, that most monstrous of crimes would go oftentimes unpunished, since, of all culprits, murderers do most shun the eyes of men in their dark deeds, and so provide beforehand that direct testimony to their execrable crime there shall be none. Only herein I am advised to take a distinction that escaped the learned sergeant; I say that first of all it ought to be proved directly, and to the naked eye, that a man has been murdered; and then, if none saw the crime done, let circumstances point out the murderer.

“But here they put the cart before the horse; they find a dead body, with no marks of violence whatever, and labor to prove by circumstantial evidence alone that this mere dead body is a murdered body. This, I am advised, is bad in law, and contrary to general precedents; and the particular precedents for it are not examples, but warnings, since both the prisoners so rashly convicted were proved innocent after their execution.”

(The judge took a note of this distinction.)

“Then, to go from principles to the facts, I

agree and admit that, in a moment of anger, I was so transported out of myself as to threaten my husband’s life before Caroline Ryder. But afterward, when I saw him face to face, then, that I threatened him with *violence*, that I deny. The fact is, I had just learned that he had committed a capital offense, and what I threatened him with was the law. This was proved by Jane Bannister. She says she heard me say the constables should come for him next morning. For what?—to murder him?”

The Judge. Give me leave, madam. Shall you prove Mr. Gaunt had committed a capital offense?

Prisoner. I could, my lord, but I am loth to do it; for if I did, I should cast him into worse trouble than I am in myself.

The Judge (shaking his head gravely). Let me advise you to advance nothing you are not able and willing to prove.

The Prisoner. Then I confine myself to this: it was proved by a witness for the crown that in the dining-room I threatened my husband to his face with the law. Now this threat, and not that other extravagant threat, which he never heard, you know, was clearly the threat which caused him to abscond that night.

“In the next place, I agree with the learned counsel that I was out of doors at one o’clock that morning. But if he will use me as HIS WITNESS in that matter, then he must not pick, and choose, and mutilate my testimony. Nay, let him take the whole truth, and not just so much as he can square with the indictment. Either believe me, that I was out of doors praying, or do not believe me that I was out of doors at all.

“Gentlemen, hear the simple truth. You may see in the map, on the south side of Hershaw Castle, a grove of large fir-trees. ’Tis a reverend place, most fit for prayer and meditation. Here I have prayed a thousand times and more before the fifteenth of October. Hence ’tis called ‘the Dame’s Haunt,’ as I shall prove, that am the dame ’tis called after.

“Let it not seem incredible to you that I should pray out of doors in my grove on a fine, clear, starry night. For aught I know, Protestants may pray only by the fireside; but remember, I am a Catholic. We are not so contracted in our praying. We do not confine it to little comfortable places. Nay, but for seventeen hundred years and more we have prayed out of doors as much as in doors. And this our custom is no fit subject for a shallow sneer. How does the learned sergeant know that, beneath the vault of heaven at night, studded with those angelic eyes, the stars, is an unfit place to bend the knee, and raise the soul in prayer? Has he ever tried it?”

This sudden appeal to a learned and eminent, but by no means devotional sergeant, so tickled the gentlemen of the bar that they burst out laughing with singular unanimity.

This dashed the prisoner, who had not intended to be funny; and she hesitated, and looked distressed.

The Judge. Proceed, madam: these remarks of yours are singular, but quite pertinent, and no fit subject for ridicule. Gentlemen, remember the public looks to you for an example.

Prisoner. My lord, ’twas my fault for making that personal which should be general. But

women they are so. 'Tis our foible. I pray the good sergeant to excuse me.

"I say, then, generally, that when the sun retires, then earth fades, but heaven comes out in tenfold glory; and I say the starry firmament at night is a temple not built with hands, and the bare sight of it subdues the passions, chastens the heart, and aids the soul in prayer surprisingly. My lord, as I am a Christian woman, 'tis true that my husband had wronged me cruelly and broken the law. 'Tis true that I raged against him and he answered me not again. 'Tis true, as that witness said, that my bark is worse than my bite. I cooled, and then felt I had forgotten the wife and the Christian in my wrath. I repented, and, to be more earnest in my penitence, I did go and pray out of doors beneath those holy eyes of heaven that seemed to look down with chaste reproach on my ungoverned heat. I left my fireside, my velvet cushions, and all the little comforts made by human hands, that adorn our earthly dwellings, but distract our eyes from God."

Some applause followed this piece of eloquence, exquisitely uttered. It was checked, and the prisoner resumed, with an entire change of manner.

"Gentlemen, the case against me is like a piece of rotten wood varnished all over. It looks fair to the eye, but will not bear handling.

"As example of what I say, take three charges on which the learned sergeant greatly relied on opening his case:

"1st. That I received Thomas Leicester in my bedroom.

"2d. That he went hot from me after Mr. Gaunt.

"3d. That he was seen following Mr. Gaunt with a bloody intent.

"How ugly these three proofs looked at first sight! Well, but when we squeezed the witnesses ever so little, what did these three dwindle down to?

1st. That I received Thomas Leicester in an anteroom, which leads to a boudoir, and that boudoir leads to my bedroom.

"2d. That Thomas Leicester went from me to the kitchen, and there, for a good half hour, drank my ale (as it appears), and made love to his old sweetheart, Caroline Ryder, the false witness for the crown, and went abroad fresh from her, and not from me.

"3d. That he was not (to speak strictly) seen following Mr. Gaunt, but just walking on the same road, drunk, and staggering, and going at such a rate that, as the crown's own witness swore, he could hardly, in the nature of things, overtake Mr. Gaunt, who walked quicker, and straighter too, than he.

"So, then, even if a murder has been done, they have failed to connect Thomas Leicester with it, or me with Thomas Leicester. Two broken links in a chain of but three.

"And now I come to the more agreeable part of my defense. I do think there has been no murder at all.

"There is no evidence of a murder.

"A body is found with the flesh eaten by fishes, but the bones and the head unenured. They swear a surgeon, who has examined the body, and certainly he had the presumption to guess it looks like a murdered body; but, being sifted, he was forced to admit that, so far as his expe-

rience of murdered bodies goes, it is not like a murdered body, for there is no bone broken nor bruise on the head.

"Where is the body found? In the water. But water by itself is a sufficient cause of death, and a common cause too, and kills without breaking bones or bruising the head. O perversity of the wise! For every one creature murdered in England, ten are accidentally drowned; and they find a dead man in the water, which is as much as to say they find the slain in the arms of the slayer; yet they do not once suspect the water, but go about in search of a strange and monstrous crime.

"Mr. Gaunt's cry for help was heard *here*, if it was heard at all (which I greatly doubt), here by this clump of trees; the body was found here, hard by the bridge, which is, by measurement, one furlong and sixty paces from that clump of trees, as I shall prove. There is no current in the mere lively enough to move a body, and what there is runs the wrong way. So this disconnects the cry for help and the dead body. Another broken link!

"And now I come to my third defense. I say the body is not the body of Griffith Gaunt.

"The body, mutilated as it was, had two distinguishing marks—a mole on the brow, and a pair of hobnailed shoes on the feet.

"Now the advisers of the crown fix their eyes on that mole, but they turn their heads away from the hobnailed shoes. But why? Articles of raiment found on a body are legal evidence of identity. How often, my lord, in cases of murder, hath the crown relied on such particulars, especially in cases where corruption had obscured the features.

"I shall not imitate this partiality, this obstinate prejudice; I shall not ask you to shut your eyes on the mole, as they do on the shoes, but shall meet the whole truth fairly.

"Mr. Gaunt went from my house that morning with boots on his feet and with a mole on his brow.

"Thomas Leicester went the same road, with shoes on his feet, and, as I shall prove, with a mole on his brow.

"To be sure the crown witnesses did not distinctly admit this mole on him, but you will remember they dared not deny it on their oaths, and so run their heads into an indictment for perjury.

"But, gentlemen, I shall put seven witnesses into the box who will all swear that they have known Thomas Leicester for years, and that he had a mole upon his left temple.

"One of these witnesses is—the mother that bore him.

"I shall then call witnesses to prove that, on the fifteenth of October, the bridge over the mere was in bad repair, and a portion of the side rail gone; and that the body was found within a few yards of that defective bridge; and then, as Thomas Leicester went that way, drunk, and staggering from side to side, you may reasonably infer that he fell into the water in passing the bridge. To show this is possible, I shall prove the same thing has actually occurred. I shall swear the oldest man in the parish, who will depose to a similar event that happened in his boyhood. He hath said it a thousand times before to-day, and now will swear it. He will tell you

that on a certain day, sixty-nine years ago, the parson of Hernshaw, the Rev. Augustus Murthwaite, went to cross this bridge at night, after carousing at Hernshaw Castle with our great-grandfather, my husband's and mine, the then proprietor of Hernshaw, and tumbled into the water; and his body was found, gnawed out of the very form of humanity by the fishes, within a yard or two of the spot where poor Tom Leicester was found, that hath cost us all this trouble. So do the same causes bring round the same events in a cycle of years. The only difference is that the parson drank his death in our dining-room, and the peddler in our kitchen.

"No doubt, my lord, you have observed that sometimes a hasty and involuntary inaccuracy gives quite a wrong color to a thing. I assure you I have suffered by this. It is said that the moment Mr. Atkins proposed to drag my mere, I fainted away. In this account there is an omission. I shall prove that Mr. Atkins used these words—'And underneath that water I undertake to find the remains of Griffith Gaunt.' Now, gentlemen, you shall understand that at this time, and indeed until the moment when I saw the shoes upon that poor corpse's feet, I was in great terror for my husband's life. How could it be otherwise? Caroline Ryder had told me she heard his cry for help. He had disappeared. What was I to think? I feared he had fallen in with robbers. I feared all manner of things. So, when the lawyer said so positively he would find his body, I was overpowered. Ah! gentlemen, wedded life survives many wrongs, many angry words; I love my husband still; and when the man told me so brutally that he was certainly dead, I fainted away. I confess it. Shall I be hanged for that?"

"But now, thank God! I am full of hope that he is alive, and that good hope has given me the courage to make this great effort to save my own life.

"Hitherto I have been able to contradict my accusers positively, but now I come to a mysterious circumstance that I own puzzles me. Most persons accused of murder could, if they chose, make a clean breast, and tell you the whole matter. But this is not my case. I know shoes from boots, and I know Kate Gaunt from a liar and a murderess; but, when all is said, this is still a dark, mysterious business, and there are things in it I can only deal with as you do, gentlemen, by bringing my wits to bear upon them in reasonable conjecture.

"Caroline Ryder swears she heard Mr. Gaunt cry for help. And Mr. Gaunt has certainly disappeared.

"My accusers have somewhat weakened this by trying to palm off the body of Thomas Leicester on you for the body of Mr. Gaunt. But the original mystery remains, and puzzles me. I might fairly appeal to you to disbelieve the witness. She is proved incontinent, and a practised liar, and she forswore herself in this court, and my lord is in two minds about committing her. But a liar does not always lie, and, to be honest, I think she really *believes* she heard Mr. Gaunt cry for help, for she went straight to his bedroom, and that looks as if she really thought she heard his voice. But a liar may be mistaken; do not forget that. Distance affects the voice; and I think the voice she heard was Thomas Leices-

ter's, and the place of name from higher up the mere.

"This, my notion will surprise you less when I prove to you that Leicester's voice bore a family likeness to Mr. Gaunt's. I shall call two witnesses who have been out hooting with Mr. Gaunt and Tom Leicester, and have heard Leicester halloo in the wood, and taken it for Mr. Gaunt.

"Must I tell you the whole truth? This Leicester has always passed for an illegitimate son of Mr. Gaunt's father. He resembled my husband in form, stature, and voice; he had the Gaunt mole, and has often spoken of it by that name. My husband forgave him many faults for no other reason, and I bought his wares and filled his pack for no other reason than this—that he was my husband's brother by nature, though not in law. 'HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE.'

"Ah! that is a royal device; yet how often in this business have the advisers of the crown forgotten it?"

"My lord, and gentlemen of the jury, I return from these conjectures to the indisputable facts of my defense.

"Mr. Gaunt may be alive or may be dead. He was certainly alive on the fifteenth of October, and it lies on the crown to prove him dead, and not on me to prove him alive. But, as for the body that forms the subject of this indictment, it is the body of Thomas Leicester, who was seen on the sixteenth of October, at one in the morning, drunk and staggering, and making for Hernshaw bridge, which leads to his mother's house; and on all his former visits to Hernshaw Castle he went on to his mother's. I shall prove. This time he never reached her, as I shall prove; but on his way to her did meet his death by the will of God, and no fault of man or woman, in Hernshaw Mere.

"Swear Sarah Leicester."

The Judge. I think you say you have several witnesses?

Prisoner. More than twenty, my lord.

The Judge. We can not possibly dispose of them this evening. We will hear your evidence to-morrow. Prisoner, this will enable you to consult with your legal advisers, and let me urge upon you to prove, if you can, that Mr. Gaunt has a sufficient motive for hiding and not answering Mr. Atkins's invitation to inherit a large estate. Some such proof is necessary to complete your defense; and I am sorry to see you have made no mention of it in your address, which was otherwise able.

Prisoner. My lord, I think I can prove my own innocence without casting a slur upon my husband.

The Judge. You think? when your life is at stake. Be not so mad as to leave so large a hole in your defense, if you can mend it. Take advice.

He said this very solemnly—then rose and left the court.

Mrs. Gaunt was conveyed back to prison, and there was soon prostrated by the depression that follows an unnatural excitement.

Mr. Houseman found her on the sofa, pale and dejected, and clasping the jailer's wife convulsively, who applied hartshorn to her nostrils.

He proved but a Job's comforter. Her defense, creditable as it was to a novice, seemed

wordy and weak to him, a lawyer; and he was horrified at the admissions she had made. In her place he would have admitted nothing he could not thoroughly explain.

He came to insist on a change of tactics.

When he saw her sad condition, he tried to begin by consoling and encouraging her. But his own serious misgivings unfitted him for this task, and very soon, notwithstanding the state she was in, he was almost scolding her for being so mad as to withstand the judge, and set herself against his advice. "There," said he, "my lord kept his word, and became counsel for you. 'Close that gap in your defense,' says he, 'and you will very likely be acquitted.' 'Nay,' says you, 'I prefer to chance it.' What madness! what injustice!"

"Injustice! to whom?"

"To whom? why, to yourself."

"What! may I not be unjust to myself?"

"Certainly not; you have no right to be unjust to any body. Don't deceive yourself; there is no virtue in this; it is mere miserable weakness. What right have you to peril an innocent life merely to screen the malefactor from just obloquy?"

"Alas!" said Mrs. Gaunt, "'tis more than obloquy. They will kill him; they will brand him with a hot iron."

"Not unless he is indicted; and who will indict him? Sir George Neville must be got to muzzle the attorney general, and the Lancashire jade will not move against him, for you say they are living together."

"Of course they are; and, as you say, why should I screen him? But 'twill not serve; who can combat prejudice? If what I have said does not convince them, an angel's voice would not. Sir, I am a Catholic, and they will hang me. I shall die miserably, having exposed my husband, who loved me once—oh! so dearly. I trifled with his love. I deserve it all."

"You will not die at all, if you will only be good and obedient, and listen to wiser heads. I have subpoenaed Caroline Ryder as your witness, and given her a hint how to escape an indictment for perjury. You will find her supple as a glove."

"Call a rattlesnake for my witness?"

"I have drawn her fangs. You will also call Sir George Neville, to prove he saw Gaunt's picture at the 'Packhorse,' and heard the other wife's tale. Wiltshire will object to this as evidence, and say why don't you produce Mercy Vint herself. Then you will call me to prove that I sent the subpoena to Mercy Vint. Come, now, I can not eat or sleep till you promise me."

Mrs. Gaunt sighed deeply. "Spare me," said she; "I am worn out. Oh that I could die before the trial begins again!"

Houseman saw the signs of yielding, and persisted. "Come, promise now," said he, "then you will feel better."

"I will do whatever you bid me," said she. "Only, if they let me off, I will go into a convent. No power shall hinder me."

"You shall go where you like, except to the gallows. Enough; 'tis a promise, and I never knew you to break one. Now I can eat my supper. You are a good, obedient child, and I am a happy attorney."

I

"And I am the most miserable woman in all England."

"Child," said the worthy lawyer, "your spirits have given way because they were strung so high. You need repose. Go to bed now, and sleep twelve hours. Believe me you will wake another woman."

"Ah! would I could!" cried Mrs. Gaunt, with all the eloquence of despair.

Houseman murmured a few more consoling words, and then left her, after once more exacting a promise that she would receive no more visits, but go to bed directly. She was to send all intruders to him at the "Angel."

Mrs. Gaunt proceeded to obey his orders, and though it was but eight o'clock, she made preparations for bed, and then went to her nightly devotions.

She was in sore trouble, and earthly trouble turns the heart heavenward. Yet it was not so with her. The deep languor that oppressed her seemed to have reached her inmost soul. Her beads, falling one by one from her hand, denoted the number of her supplications; but, for once, they were *precēs sine mente dictæ*. Her faith was cold, her belief in divine justice was shaken for a time. She began to doubt and to despond. That bitter hour, which David has sung so well, and Bunyan, from experience, has described in his biography as well as in his novel, sat heavy upon her, as it had on many a true believer before her. So deep was the gloom, so paralyzing the languor, that at last she gave up all endeavor to utter words of prayer. She placed her crucifix at the foot of the wall, and laid herself down on the ground and kissed His feet; then, drawing back, gazed upon that effigy of the mortal sufferings of our Redeemer.

"O anima Christiana, respice vulnera patientis, sanguinem morientis, precem redemptionis nostræ."

She had lain thus a good half hour, when a gentle tap came to the door.

"Who is that?" said she.

"Mrs. Menteith," the jailer's wife replied, softly, and asked leave to come in.

Now this Mrs. Menteith had been very kind to her, and stoutly maintained her innocence. Mrs. Gaunt rose and invited her in.

"Madam," said Mrs. Menteith, "what I come for, there is a person below who much desires to see you."

"I beg to be excused," was the reply. "He must go to my solicitor at the 'Angel,' Mr. Houseman."

Mrs. Menteith retired with that message, but in about five minutes returned to say that the young woman declined to go to Mr. Houseman, and begged hard to see Mrs. Gaunt. "And, dame," said she, "if I were you I'd let her come in; 'tis the honestest face, and the tears in her soft eyes at your denying her. 'Oh dear, dear,' said she, 'I can not tell my errand to any but her.'"

"Well, well," said Mrs. Gaunt; "but what is her business?"

"If you ask me, I think her business is your business. Come, dame, do see the poor thing; she is civil spoken, and she tells me she has come all the way out o' Lancashire o' purpose."

Mrs. Gaunt recoiled as if she had been stung.

"From Lancashire?" said she, faintly.

"Ay, madam," said Mrs. Menteith, "and that is a long road; and a child upon her arm all the way, poor thing!"

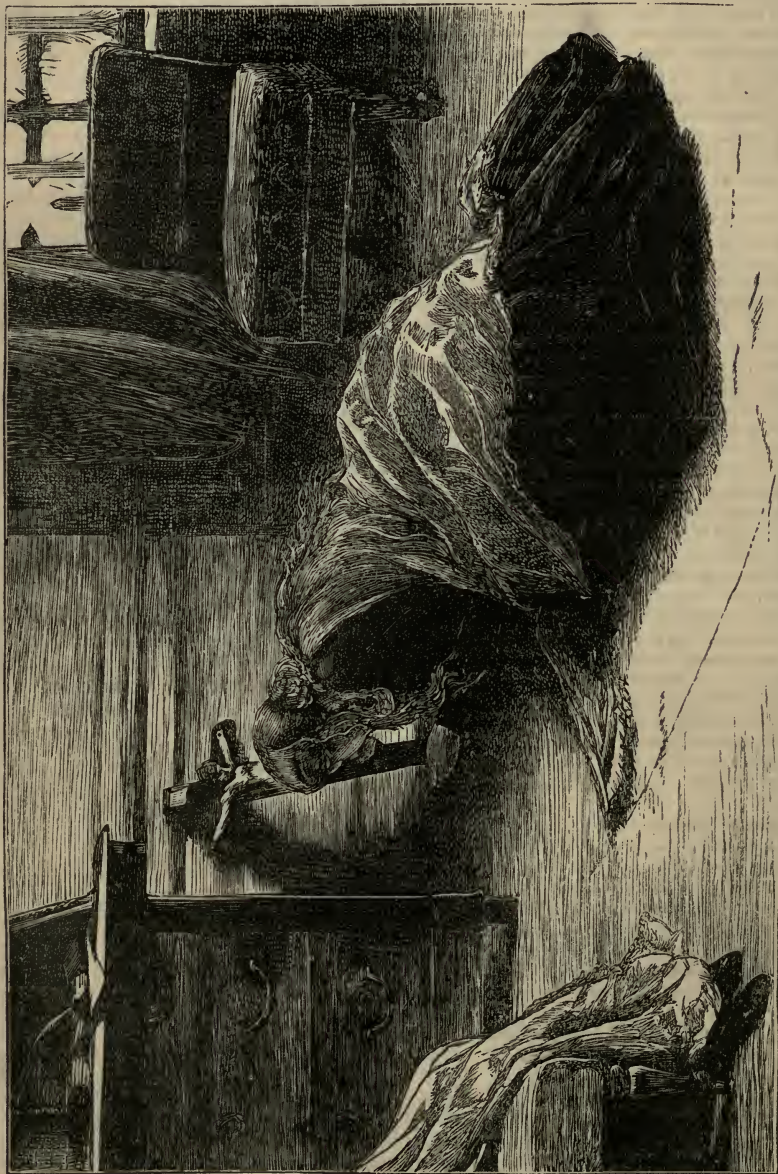
"Her name?" said Mrs. Gaunt, sternly.

"Oh, she is not ashamed of it. She gave it me directly."

"What! has she the effrontery to take my name?"

"Well, I'm sure I don't know what to do," said Mrs. Menteith. "She says she will lie at your door all night but she will see you. 'Tis the face of a friend. She may know something. It seems hard to thrust her and her child out into the street, after their coming all the way from Lancashire."

Mrs. Gaunt stood silent a while, and her in-



"She placed her crucifix at the foot of the wall, and kissed His feet."

[Page 129.]

Mrs. Menteith stared at her with utter amazement. "Your name?" said she. "'Tis a simple country body, and her name is Vint—Mercy Vint."

Mrs. Gaunt was very much agitated, and said she felt quite unequal to see a stranger.

telligence had a severe combat with her deep repugnance to be in the same room with Griffith Gaunt's mistress (so she considered her). But a certain curiosity came to the aid of her good sense; and, after all, she was a brave and haughty woman, and her natural courage began to rise.

She thought to herself, "What! dare she come to me all this way, and shall I shrink from her?"

She turned to Mrs. Menteith with a bitter smile, and she said, very slowly, and clenching her white teeth, "Since you desire it, and she insists on it, I will receive Mistress Mercy Vint."

Mrs. Menteith went off, and in about five minutes returned ushering in Mercy Vint in a hood and traveling cloak.

Mrs. Gaunt received her standing, and with a very formal courtesy, to which Mercy made a quiet obeisance, and both women looked one another all over in a moment.

Mrs. Menteith lingered, to know what on earth this was all about; but, as neither spoke a word, and their eyes were fixed on each other, she divined that her absence was necessary, and so retired slowly, looking very much amazed at both of them.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Be seated, mistress, if you please," said Mrs. Gaunt, with icy civility, "and let me know to what I owe this extraordinary visit."

"I thank you, dame," said Mercy, "for indeed I am sore fatigued." She sat quietly down.

"Why I have come to you? It was to serve you, and to keep my word with George Neville."

"Will you be kind enough to explain?" said Mrs. Gaunt, in a freezing tone, and with a look of her great gray eye to match.

Mercy felt chilled, and was too frank to disguise it. "Alas!" said she, softly, "'tis hard to be received so, and me come all the way from Lancashire, with a heart like lead, to do my duty, God willing."

The tears stood in her eyes, and her mellow voice was sweet and patient.

The gentle remonstrance was not quite without effect. Mrs. Gaunt colored a little. She said, stiffly, "Excuse me if I seem discourteous, but you and I ought not to be in one room a moment. You do not see this, apparently. But at least I have a right to insist that such an interview shall be very brief, and to the purpose. Oblige me, then, by telling me in plain terms why you have come hither."

"Madam, to be your witness at the trial."

"You to be my witness?"

"Why not, if I can clear you? What, would you rather be condemned for murder than let me show them you are innocent? Alas! how you hate me."

"Hate you, child?" said Mrs. Gaunt, coloring to her temples; "of course I hate you. We are both of us flesh and blood, and hate one another; and one of us is honest enough, and uncivil enough, to say so."

"Speak for yourself, dame," replied Mercy, quietly, "for I hate you not; and I thank God for it. To hate is to be miserable. I'd liefer be hated than to hate."

Mrs. Gaunt looked at her. "Your words are goodly and wise," said she; "your face is honest; and your eyes are like a very dove's. But, for all that, you hate me quietly, with all your heart. Human nature is human nature."

"'Tis so. But grace is grace." Mercy was silent a moment, then resumed: "I'll not deny I did hate you for a time, when first I learned the

man I had married had a wife, and you were she. We that be women are too unjust to each other, and too indulgent to a man. But I have worn out my hate. I wrestled in prayer, and the God of Love he did quench my most unreasonable hate. For 'twas the man betrayed me; you never wronged me, nor I you. But you are right, madam; 'tis true that nature without grace is black as pitch: the devil he was busy at my ear, and whispered me, 'If the fools in Cumberland hang her, what fault o' thine? Thou wilt be his lawful wife, and thy poor innocent child will be a child of shame no more.' But, by God's grace, I did defy him, and I do defy him." She rose swiftly from her chair, and her dove's eyes gleamed with celestial light. "Get thee behind me Satan. I tell thee the hangman shall never have her innocent body, nor thou my soul."

The movement was so unexpected, the words and the look so simply noble, that Mrs. Gaunt rose too, and gazed upon her visitor with astonishment and respect, yet still with a dash of doubt.

She thought to herself, "If this creature is not sincere, what a mistress of deceit she must be!"

But Mercy Vint soon returned to her quiet self. She sat down, and said gravely, and, for the first time, a little coldly, as one who had deserved well and been received ill, "Mistress Gaunt, you are accused of murdering your husband. 'Tis false, for two days ago I saw him alive."

"What do you say?" cried Mrs. Gaunt, trembling all over.

"Be brave, madam; you have borne great trouble; do not give way under joy. He who has wronged us both—he who wedded you under his own name of Griffith Gaunt, and me under the false name of Thomas Leicester, is no more dead than we are; I saw him two days ago, and spoke to him, and persuaded him to come to Carlisle town and do you justice."

Mrs. Gaunt fell on her knees. "He is alive—he is alive. Thank God! oh, thank God! He is alive; and God bless the tongue that tells me so. God bless you eternally, Mercy Vint."

The tears of joy streamed down her face, and then Mercy's flowed too. She uttered a little pathetic cry of joy. "Ah!" she sobbed, "the bit of comfort I needed so has come to my heavy heart. She has blessed me!"

But she said this very softly, and Mrs. Gaunt was in a rapture, and did not hear her.

"Is it a dream? My husband alive, and you the one to come and tell me so? How unjust I have been to you. Forgive me. Why does he not come himself?"

Mercy colored at this question, and hesitated.

"Well, dame," said she, "for one thing, he has been on the fuddle for the last two months."

"On the fuddle?"

"Ay; he owns he has never been sober a whole day, and that takes the heart out of a man as well as the brains. And then he has got it into his head that you will never forgive him, and that he shall be cast in prison if he shows his face in Cumberland."

"Why in Cumberland more than in Lancashire?" asked Mrs. Gaunt, biting her lip.

Mercy blushed faintly. She replied with some

delicacy, but did not altogether mince the matter.

"He knows I shall never punish him for what he has done to me."

"Why not? I begin to think he has wronged you almost as much as he has me."

"Worse, madam—worse. He has robbed me of my good name. You are still his lawful wife, and none can point the finger at you. But look at me: I was an honest girl, respected by all the parish. What has he made of me? The man that lay a dying in my house, and I saved his life, and so my heart did warm to him, he blasphemed God's altar to deceive and betray me; and here I am, a poor forlorn creature, neither maid, wife, nor widow, with a child on my arms that I do nothing but cry over; ay, my poor innocent, I left thee down below, because I was ashamed she should see thee—ah me! ah me!" She lifted up her voice and wept.

Mrs. Gaunt looked at her wistfully, and, like Mercy before her, had a bitter struggle with human nature—a struggle so sharp that, in the midst of it, she burst out crying with strange violence; but, with that burst, her great soul conquered.

She darted out of the room, leaving Mercy astonished at her abrupt departure.

Mercy was patiently drying her eyes, when the door opened, and judge her surprise when she saw Mrs. Gaunt glide into the room with her little boy asleep in her arms, and an expression upon her face more sublime than any thing Mercy Vint had ever yet seen on earth. She kissed the babe softly, and, becoming infantine as well as angelic by this contact, sat herself down in a moment on the floor with him, and held out her hand to Mercy. "There," said she, "come sit beside us, and see how I hate him; no more than you do—sweet innocent."

They looked him all over, discussed his every feature learnedly, kissed his limbs and extremities after the manner of their sex, and comprehending at last that to have been both of them wronged by one man was a bond of sympathy, not hate, the two wives of Griffith Gaunt laid his child across their two laps, and wept over him together.

Mercy Vint took herself to task. "I am but a selfish woman," said she, "to talk or think of any thing but that I came here for." She then proceeded to show Mrs. Gaunt by what means she proposed to secure her acquittal without getting Griffith Gaunt into trouble.

Mrs. Gaunt listened with keen and grateful attention until she came to that part, then she interrupted her eagerly.

"Don't spare him for me. In your place I'd trounce the villain finely."

"Ay," said Mercy, "and then forgive him. But I am different. I shall never forgive him; but I am a poor hand at punishing and revenging. I always was. My name is Mercy, you know. To tell the truth, I *was* to have been called Prudence, after my good aunt; but she said nay: she had lived to hear Greed, and Selfishness, and a heap of faults named Prudence: 'call the child something that means what it does mean, and not after me,' quoth she. So with me hearing 'Mercy, Mercy,' called out after me so many years, I do think the quality hath somehow

got under my skin, for I can't abide to see folk smart, let alone to strike the blow. What! shall I take the place of God, and punish the evil-doers because 'tis me they wrong? Nay, dame, I will never punish him, though he hath wronged me cruelly; all I shall do is to think very ill of him, and shun him, and tear his memory out of my heart. You look at me; do you think I can not? You don't know me. I am very resolute when I see clear. Of course I loved him—loved him dearly. He was like a husband to me, and a kind one. But the moment I knew how basely he had deceived us both, my heart began to turn against the man, and now 'tis ice to him. Heaven knows what I am made of; for, believe me, I'd liefer ten times be beside you than beside him. My heart it lay like a lump of lead till I heard your story, and found I could do you a good turn—you that he had wronged as well as me. I read your beautiful eyes; but nay, fear me not; I'm not the woman to pine for the fruit that is my neighbor's. All I ask for on earth is a few kind words and looks from you. You are gentle and I am simple, but we are both one flesh and blood, and your lovely wet eyes do prove it this moment. Dame Gaunt—Kate—I ne'er was ten miles from home afore, and I am come all this weary way to serve thee. Oh, give me the one thing that can do me good in this world, the one thing I pine for—a little of your love."

The words were scarce out of her lips when Mrs. Gaunt caught her impetuously round the neck with both hands, and laid her on that erring but noble heart of hers, and kissed her eagerly.

They kissed one another again and again, and wept over one another.

And now Mrs. Gaunt, who did nothing by halves, could not make enough of Mercy Vint. She ordered supper, and ate with her to make her eat. Mrs. Menteith offered Mercy a bed, but Mrs. Gaunt said she must lie with her, she and her child.

"What!" said she, "think you I'll let you out of my sight? Alas! who knows when you and I shall ever be together again?"

"I know," said Mercy, very gravely. "In this world—never."

They slept in one bed, and held each other by the hand all night, and talked to one another, and in the morning knew each the other's story, and each the other's mind and character, better than their oldest acquaintances knew either the one or the other.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE trial began again, and the court was crowded to suffocation. All eyes were bent on the prisoner. She rose, calm and quiet, and begged leave to say a few words to the court.

Mr. Whitworth objected to that. She had concluded her address yesterday, and called a witness.

Prisoner. But I have not examined a witness yet.

The Judge. You come somewhat out of time, madam, but, if you will be brief, we will hear you.

Prisoner. I thank you, my lord. It was only to withdraw an error. The cry for help that was heard by the side of Henshaw Mere, I said, yesterday, that cry was uttered by Thomas Leicester.

Well, I find I was mistaken; the cry for help was uttered by my husband—by that Griffith Gaunt I am accused of assassinating.

This extraordinary admission caused a great sensation in court. The judge looked grave and sad; and Sergeant Wiltshire, who came into court just then, whispered his junior, "She has put the rope round her own neck. The jury would never have believed our witness."

The Prisoner. I will only add that a person came into the town last night who knows a great deal more about this mysterious business than I do. I purpose, therefore, to alter the line of my defense; and, to save your time, my lord, who have dealt so courteously with me, I shall call but a single witness.

Ere the astonishment caused by this sudden collapse of the defense was in any degree abated, she called "Mercy Vint."

There was the usual stir and struggle, and then the calm, self-possessed face and figure of a comely young woman confronted the court. She was sworn, and examined by the prisoner after this fashion.

"Where do you live?"

"At the 'Packhorse,' near Allerton, in Lancashire."

Prisoner. Do you know Mr. Griffith Gaunt?

Mercy. Madam, I do.

Prisoner. Was he at your place in October last?

Mercy. Yes, madam, on the thirteenth of October. On that day he left for Cumberland.

Prisoner. On foot, or on horseback?

Mercy. On horseback.

Prisoner. With boots on, or shoes?

Mercy. He had a pair of new boots on.

Prisoner. Do you know Thomas Leicester?

Mercy. A peddler called at our house on the eleventh of October, and he said his name was Thomas Leicester.

Prisoner. How was he shod?

Mercy. In hobnailed shoes.

Prisoner. Which way went he on leaving you?

Mercy. Madam, he went northward; I know no more for certain.

Prisoner. When did you see Mr. Gaunt last?

Mercy. Four days ago.

The Judge. What is that? you saw him alive four days ago.

Mercy. Ay, my lord; the last Wednesday that ever was.

At this the people burst out into a loud, agitated murmur, and their heads went to and fro all the time. In vain the crier cried and threatened. The noise rose and surged, and took its course. It went down gradually as amazement gave way to curiosity, and then there was a remarkable silence, and then the silvery voice of the prisoner and the mellow tones of the witness appeared to penetrate the very walls of the building, each syllable of those two beautiful speakers was heard so distinctly.

Prisoner. Be so good as to tell the court what passed on Wednesday last between Griffith Gaunt and you, relative to this charge of murder.

Mercy. I let him know one George Neville had come from Cumberland in search of him, and had told me you lay in Carlisle jail charged with his murder. I did urge him to ride at once to Carlisle and show himself, but he refused. He made light of the matter. Then I told him, Not so;

the circumstances looked ugly, and your life was in peril. Then he said Nay, 'twas in no peril, for if you were to be found guilty, then he would show himself on the instant. Then I told him he was not worthy the name of a man, and if he would not go, I would. "Go you, by all means," said he, "and I'll give you a writing that will clear her. Jack Houseman will be there, that knows my hand; and so does the sheriff, and half the grand jury at the least."

Prisoner. Have you that writing?

Mercy. To be sure I have. Here 'tis.

Prisoner. Be pleased to read it.

The Judge. Stay a minute. Shall you prove it to be his handwriting?

Prisoner. Ay, my lord, by as many as you please.

The Judge. Then let that stand over for the present. Let me see it.

It was handed up to him; and he showed it to the sheriff, who said he thought it was Griffith Gaunt's writing.

The paper was then read out to the jury. It ran as follows:

"Know all men, that I, Griffith Gaunt, Esq., of Bolton Hall and Hershaw Castle, in the county of Cumberland, am alive and well; and the matter which has so puzzled the good folk in Cumberland befell as follows: I left Hershaw Castle in the dead of night upon the fifteenth of October—why, is no man's business but mine. I found the stable locked, so I left my horse and went on foot. I crossed Hershaw Mere by the bridge, and had got about a hundred yards, as I suppose, on the way, when I heard some one fall with a great splash into the mere, and soon after cry dolefully for help. I, that am no swimmer, ran instantly to the north side to a clump of trees, where a boat used always to be kept. But the boat was not there. Then I cried lustily for help, and, as no one came, I fired my pistol and cried murder! for I had heard men will come sooner to that cry than to any other. But, in truth, I was almost out of my wits that a fellow-creature should perish miserably so near me. While I ran wildly to and fro, some came out of the castle bearing torches. By this time I was at the bridge, but saw no signs of the drowning man; yet the night was clear. Then I knew that his fate was sealed; and, for reasons of my own, not choosing to be seen by those who were coming to his aid, I hastened from the place. My happiness being gone, and my conscience smiting me sore, and not knowing whither to turn, I took to drink, and fell into bad ways, and lived like a brute, and not a man, for six weeks or more, so that I never knew of the good fortune that had fallen on me when least I deserved it—I mean by old Mr. Gaunt of Coggleswade making of me his heir. But one day at Kendal I saw Mercy Vint's advertisement, and I went to her, and learned that my wife lay in Carlisle jail for my supposed murder. But I say that she is innocent, and nowise to blame in this matter, for I deserved every hard word she ever gave me; and as for killing, she is a spirited woman with her tongue, but hath not the heart to kill a fly. She is what she always was, the pearl of womankind—a virtuous, innocent, and noble lady. I have lost the treasure of her love by my fault, not hers; but, at least, I have a right to

defend her life and honor. Whoever molests her after this, out of pretended regard for me, is a liar, and a fool, and no friend of mine, but my enemy, and I his—to the death.

“GRIFFITH GAUNT.”

It was a day of surprises. This tribute from the murdered man to his assassin was one of them. People looked in one another's faces open-eyed.

The prisoner looked in the judge's, and acted on what she saw there. “That is my defense,” said she, quietly, and sat down.

If a show of hands had been called at that moment, she would have been acquitted by acclamation.

But Mr. Whitworth was a zealous young barrister, burning for distinction. He stuck to his case, and cross-examined Mercy Vint with severity—indeed, with asperity.

Whitworth. What are you to receive for this evidence?

Mercy. Anan.

Whitworth. Oh, you know what I mean. Are you not to be paid for telling us this romance?

Mercy. Nay, sir, I ask naught for telling of the truth.

Whitworth. You were in the prisoner's company yesterday?

Mercy. Yes, sir, I did visit her in the jail last night.

Whitworth. And there concerted this ingenious defense?

Mercy. Well, sir, for that matter, I told her that her man was alive, and I did offer to be her witness.

Whitworth. For naught?

Mercy. For no money or reward, if 'tis that you mean. Why, 'tis a joy beyond money to clear an innocent body and save her life, and that satisfaction is mine this day.

Whitworth (sarcastically). These are very fine sentiments for a person in your condition. Confess that Mrs. Gaunt primed you with all that.

Mercy. Nay, sir, I left home in that mind, else I had not come at all. Bethink you, 'tis a long journey for one in my way of life, and this dear child on my arm all the way.

Mrs. Gaunt sat boiling with indignation. But Mercy's good temper and meekness parried the attack that time. Mr. Whitworth changed his line.

Whitworth. You ask the jury to believe that Griffith Gaunt, Esquire, a gentleman, and a man of spirit and honor, is alive, yet skulks and sends you hither, when by showing his face in this court he could clear his wife without a single word spoken?

Mercy. Yes, sir, I do hope to be believed, for I speak the naked truth. But, with due respect to you, Mr. Gaunt did not send me hither against my will. I could not bide in Lancashire and let an innocent woman be murdered in Cumberland.

Whitworth. Murdered, quotha! That is a good jest. I'd have you to know we punish murders here, not do them.

Mercy. I am glad to hear that, sir, on the lady's account.

Whitworth. Come, come. You pretend you discovered this Griffith Gaunt alive by means of an advertisement. If so, produce the advertisement.

Mercy Vint colored, and cast a swift, uneasy glance at Mrs. Gaunt.

Rapid as it was, the keen eye of the counsel caught it.

“Nay, do not look to the culprit for orders,” said he. “Produce it, or confess the truth. Come, you never advertised for him.”

“Sir, I did advertise for him.”

“Then produce the advertisement.”

“Sir, I will not,” said Mercy, calmly.

“Then I shall move the court to commit you.”

“For what offense, if you please?”

“For perjury, and contempt of court.”

“I am guiltless of either, God knows. But I will not show the advertisement.”

The Judge. This is very extraordinary. Perhaps you have it not about you.”

Mercy. My lord, the truth is, I have it in my bosom. But, if I show it, it will not make this matter one whit clearer, and 'twill open the wounds of two poor women. 'Tis not for myself; but oh, my lord, look at her—hath she not gone through grief enow?

The appeal was made with a quiet, touching earnestness that affected every hearer. But the judge had a duty to perform. “Witness,” said he, “you mean well, but indeed you do the prisoner an injury by withholding this paper. Be good enough to produce it at once.”

The Prisoner (with a deep sigh). Obey my lord.

Mercy (with a deep sigh). There, sir! May the Lord forgive you the useless mischief you are doing.

Whitworth. I am doing my duty, young woman. And yours is to tell the whole truth, and not a part only.

Mercy (acquiescing). That is true, sir.

Whitworth. Why, what is this? 'Tis not Mr. Gaunt you advertise for in these papers. 'Tis Thomas Leicester.

The Judge. What is that? I don't understand.

Whitworth. Nor I neither.

The Judge. Let me see the papers. 'Tis Thomas Leicester, sure enough.

Whitworth. And you mean to swear that Griffith Gaunt answered an advertisement inviting Thomas Leicester?

Mercy. I do. Thomas Leicester was the name he went by in our part.

Whitworth. What? what? You are jesting.

Mercy. Is this a place or a time for jesting? I say he called himself Thomas Leicester.

Here the business was interrupted again by a multitudinous murmur of excited voices. Every body was whispering astonishment to his neighbor; and the whisper of a great crowd has the effect of a loud murmur.

Whitworth. Oh, he called himself Thomas Leicester, did he? Then what makes you say he is Griffith Gaunt?

Mercy. Well, sir, the peddler, whose real name was Thomas Leicester, came to our house one day, and saw his picture, and knew it, and said something to a neighbor that raised my suspicions. When he came home, I took this shirt out of a drawer; 'twas the shirt he wore when he first came to us. 'Tis marked “G. G.” (The shirt was examined.) Said I, “For God's sake speak the truth: what does G. G. stand for?” Then he told me his real name was Griffith Gaunt, and he had a wife in Cumberland. “Go back to her,” said I, “and ask her to forgive

you." Then he rode north, and I never saw him again till last Wednesday.

Whitworth (satirically). You seem to have been mighty intimate with this Thomas Leicester, whom you now call Griffith Gaunt. May I ask what was, or is, the nature of your connection with him?

Mercy was silent.

Whitworth. I must press for a reply, that we may know what value to attach to your most extraordinary evidence. Were you his wife—or his mistress?

Mercy. Indeed I hardly know; but not his mistress, or I should not be here.

Whitworth. You don't know whether you were married to the man or not?

Mercy. I do not say so. But—

She hesitated, and cast a piteous look at Mrs. Gaunt, who sat boiling with indignation.

At this look, the prisoner, who had long contained herself with difficulty, rose, with scarlet cheeks and flashing eyes, in defense of her witness, and flung her prudence to the wind.

"Fie, sir," she cried. "The woman you insult is as pure as your own mother, or mine. She deserves the pity, the respect, the veneration of all good men. Know, my lord, that my miserable husband deceived and married her under the false name he had taken; she has the marriage certificate in her bosom. Pray make her show it, whether she will or not. My lord, this Mercy Vint is more an angel than a woman. I am her rival after a manner; yet out of the goodness and greatness of her noble heart, she came all that way to save me from an unjust death. And is such a woman to be insulted? I blush for the hired advocate who can not see his superior in an incorruptible witness, a creature all truth, piety, purity, unselfishness, and goodness. Yes, sir, you began by insinuating that she was as venal as yourself, for you are one that can be bought by the first comer; and now you would cast a slur on her chastity. For shame! for shame! This is one of those rare women that adorn our whole sex, and embellish human nature; and, so long as you have the privilege of exchanging words with her, I shall stand here on the watch, to see that you treat her with due respect—ay, sir, with reverence; for I have measured you both, and she is as much your superior as she is mine."

This amazing burst was delivered with such prodigious fire and rapidity that nobody was self-possessed enough to stop it in time. It was like a furious gust of words sweeping over the court.

Mr. Whitworth, pale with anger, merely said, "Madam, the good taste of these remarks I leave the court to decide upon. But you can not be allowed to give evidence in your own defense."

"No; but in hers I will," said Mrs. Gaunt; "no power shall hinder me."

The Judge (coldly). Had you not better go on cross-examining the witness.

Whitworth. Let me see your marriage certificate, if you have one.

It was handed to him.

"Well, now, how do you know that this Thomas Leicester was Griffith Gaunt?"

The Judge. Why, she has told you he confessed it to her.

Mercy. Yes, my lord; and, besides, he wrote me two letters signed Thomas Leicester. Here

they are, and I desire they may be compared with the paper he wrote last Wednesday, and signed Griffith Gaunt. And more than that, while we lived together as man and wife, one Hamilton, a traveling painter, took our portraits, his and mine. I have brought his with me. Let his friends and neighbors look on this portrait, and say whose likeness it is. What I say and swear is, that on Wednesday last I saw and spoke with that Thomas Leicester, or Griffith Gaunt, whose likeness I now show you.

With that she lifted the portrait up, and showed it to all the court.

Instantly there was a roar of recognition.

It was one of those hard daubs that are nevertheless so monstrously like the originals.

The Judge (to Mr. Whitworth). Young gentleman, we are all greatly obliged to you. You have made the prisoner's case. There was but one weak point in it; I mean the prolonged absence of Griffith Gaunt. You have now accounted for that. You have forced a very truthful witness to depose that this Gaunt is himself a criminal, and is hiding from fear of the law. The case for the crown is a mere tissue of conjectures, on which no jury could safely convict, even if there was no defense at all. Under other circumstances I might decline to receive evidence at second hand that Griffith Gaunt is alive; but here such evidence is sufficient, for it lies on the crown to prove the man dead; but you have only proved that he was alive on the fifteenth of October, and that, since then, *somebody* is dead with shoes on. This somebody appears on the balance of proof to be Thomas Leicester, the peddler; and he has never been heard of since, and Griffith Gaunt has. Then I say you can not carry the case farther. You have not a leg to stand on. What say you, Brother Wiltshire?

Wiltshire. My lord, I think there is no case against the prisoner, and thank your lordship for relieving me of a very unpleasant task.

The question of guilty or not guilty was then put as a matter of form to the jury, who instantly brought the prisoner in not guilty.

The Judge. Catharine Gaunt, you leave this court without a stain, and with our sincere respect and sympathy. I much regret the fear and pain you have been put to: you have been terribly punished for a hasty word. Profit now by this bitter lesson; and may Heaven enable you to add a well-governed spirit to your many virtues and graces.

He half rose from his seat, and bowed courteously to her. She courtesied reverently, and retired.

He then said a few words to Mercy Vint.

"Young woman, I have no words to praise you as you deserve. You have shown us the beauty of the female character, and, let me add, the beauty of the Christian religion. You have come a long way to clear the innocent. I hope you will not stop there, but also punish the guilty person, on whom we have wasted so much pity."

"Me, my lord!" said Mercy; "I would not harm a hair of his head for as many guineas as there be hairs in mine."

"Child," said my lord, "thou art too good for this world; but go thy ways, and God bless thee."

Thus abruptly ended a trial that, at first, had looked so formidable for the accused.

The judge now retired for some refreshment, and while he was gone, Sir George Neville dashed up to the Town Hall, four in hand, and rushed in by the magistrate's door with a peddler's pack which he had discovered in the mere a few yards from the spot where the mutilated body was found.

He learned the prisoner was already acquitted. He left the pack with the sheriff, and begged him to show it to the judge, and went in search of Mrs. Gaunt.

He found her in the jailer's house. She and Mercy Vint were seated hand in hand. He started at first sight of the latter. There was a universal shaking of hands and glistening of eyes. And, when this was over, Mrs. Gaunt turned to him and said piteously, "She will go back to Lancashire to-morrow; nothing I can say will turn her."

"No, dame," said Mercy, quietly, "Cumberland is no place for me. My work is done here. Our paths in this world do lie apart. George Neville, persuade her to go home at once, and not trouble about me."

"Indeed, madam," said Sir George, "she speaks wisely: she always does. My carriage is at the door, and the people waiting by thousands in the street to welcome your deliverance."

Mrs. Gaunt drew herself up with fiery and bitter disdain.

"Are they so?" said she, grimly. "Then I'll balk them. I'll steal away in the dead of night. No, miserable populace, that howls and hisses with the strong against the weak, you shall have no part in my triumph; 'tis sacred to my friends. You honored me with your hootings; you shall not disgrace me with your acclamations. Here I stay till Mercy Vint, my guardian angel, leaves me forever."

She then requested Sir George to order his horses back to the inn, and the coachman was to hold himself in readiness to start when the whole town should be asleep.

Meantime a courier was dispatched to *Hernshaw Castle* to prepare for Mrs. Gaunt's reception.

Mrs. Menteith made a bed up for Mercy Vint, and at midnight, when the coast was clear, came the parting.

It was a sad one.

Even Mercy, who had great self-command, could not then restrain her tears.

To apply the sweet and touching words of Scripture, "They sorrowed most of all for this, that they should see each other's face no more."

Sir George accompanied Mrs. Gaunt to *Hernshaw*.

She drew back into her corner of the carriage, and was very silent and distraite.

After one or two attempts at conversation, he judged it wisest and even most polite to respect her mood.

At last she burst out, "I can not bear it, I can not bear it!"

"Why, what is amiss?" inquired Sir George.

"What is amiss? Why, 'tis all amiss. 'Tis so heartless, so ungrateful, to let that poor angel go home to Lancashire all alone, now she has served my turn. Sir George, do not think I undervalue your company, but if you *would* but take her home instead of taking me! Poor thing, she is brave; but, when the excitement

of her good action is over, and she goes back the weary road all alone, what desolation it will be! My heart bleeds for her. I know I am an unconscionable woman to ask such a thing; but then you are a true chevalier; you always were; and you saw her merit directly; oh, do pray leave me to slip unnoticed into *Hernshaw Castle*, and do you accompany my benefactress to her humble home. Will you, dear Sir George? 'Twould be such a load off my heart."

To this appeal, uttered with trembling lip and moist eyes, Sir George replied in character. He declined to desert Mrs. Gaunt until he had seen her safe home, but that done, he would ride back to *Carlisle* and escort Mercy home.

Mrs. Gaunt sighed, and said she was abusing his friendship, and should kill him with fatigue, and he was a good creature. "If any thing could make me easy, this would," said she: "you know how to talk to a woman, and comfort her. I wish I was a man; I'd cure her of Griffith before we reached the 'Packhorse.' And, now I think of it, you are a very happy man to travel eighty miles with an angel—a dove-eyed angel."

"I am a happy man to have an opportunity of complying with your desires, madam," was the demure reply. "'Tis not often you do me the honor to lay your orders on me."

After this, nothing of any moment passed until they reached *Hernshaw Castle*; and then, as they drove up to the door, and saw the hall blazing with lights, Mrs. Gaunt laid her hand softly on Sir George, and whispered, "You were right. I thank you for not leaving me."

The servants were all in the hall to receive their mistress, and among them were those who had given honest but unfavorable testimony at the trial, being called by the crown. These had consulted together, and, after many pros and cons, had decided that they had better not follow their natural impulse and hide from her face, since that might be a fresh offense. Accordingly, these witnesses, dressed in their best, stood with the others in the hall, and made their obeisances, quaking inwardly.

Mrs. Gaunt entered the hall leaning on Sir George's arm. She scarcely bestowed a look upon the late witnesses for the crown, but made them one sweeping courtesy in return, and passed on; only Sir George felt her taper fingers just nip his arm.

She made him partake of some supper, and then this chevalier des dames rode home, snatched a few hours' sleep, put on the yeoman's suit in which he had first visited the "Packhorse," and, arriving at *Carlisle*, engaged the whole inside of the coach; for his orders were to console, and he did not see his way clear to do that with two or three strangers listening to every word.

CHAPTER XLV.

A GREAT change was observable in Mrs. Gaunt after this fiery and chastening ordeal. In a short time she had been taught many lessons. She had learned that the law will not allow even a woman to say any thing and every thing with impunity. She had been in a court of justice, and seen how gravely, soberly, and fairly an accusation is sifted there, and, if false, annihilated, which else-

where it never is. Member of a sex that could never have invented a court of justice, she had found something to revere and bless in that other sex to which her erring husband belonged. Finally, she had encountered in Mercy Vint a woman whom she recognized at once as her moral superior. The contact of that pure and well-governed spirit told wonderfully upon her; she began to watch her tongue, and to bridle her high spirit. She became slower to give offense, and slower to take it. She took herself to task, and made some little excuses even for Griffith. She was resolved to retire from the world altogether; but, meantime, she bowed her head to the lessons of adversity. Her features, always lovely, but somewhat too haughty, were now softened and embellished beyond description by a mingled expression of grief, humility, and resignation.

She never mentioned her husband, but it is not to be supposed she never thought of him. She waited the course of events in dignified and patient silence.

As for Griffith Gaunt, he was in the hands of two lawyers, Atkins and Houseman. He waited on the first, and made a friend of him. "I am at your service," said he, "but not if I am to be indicted for bigamy and burned in the hand."

"These fears are idle," said Atkins. "Mercy Vint declared in open court she will not proceed against you."

"Ay, but there's my wife."

"She will keep quiet; I have Houseman's word for it."

"Ay, but there's the attorney general."

"Oh, he will not move unless he is driven. We must use a little influence. Mr. Houseman is of my mind, and he has the ear of the county."

To be brief, it was represented in high quarters that to indict Mr. Gaunt would only open Mrs. Gaunt's wounds afresh, and do no good; and so Houseman found means to muzzle the attorney general.

Just three weeks after the trial, Griffith Gaunt, Esq., reappeared publicly. The place of his re-appearance was Coggleswade. He came and set about finishing his new mansion with feverish rapidity. He engaged an army of carpenters and painters, and spent thousands of pounds on the decorating and furnishing of the mansion, and laying out the grounds.

This was duly reported to Mrs. Gaunt, who said—not a word.

But at last one day came a letter to Mrs. Gaunt, in Griffith's well-known hand-writing.

With all her acquired self-possession, her hand trembled as she broke open the seal.

It contained but these words:

"MADAM,—I do not ask you to forgive me, for, if you had done what I have, I could never forgive you. But, for the sake of Rose, and to stop their tongues, I do hope you will do me the honor to live under this my roof. I dare not face Hershaw Castle. Your own apartments here are now ready for you. The place is large. Upon my honor I will not trouble you, but show myself always, as now, your penitent and very humble servant,
GRIFFITH GAUNT."

The messenger was to wait for her reply.

This letter disturbed Mrs. Gaunt's sorrowful tranquillity at once. She was much agitated,

and so undecided that she sent the messenger away, and told him to call next day.

Then she sent off to Father Francis to beg his advice.

But her courier returned late at night to say Father Francis was away from home.

Then she took Rose, and said to her, "My darling, papa wants us to go to his new house, and leave dear old Hershaw; I know not what to say about that. What do you say?"

"Tell him to come to us," said Rose, dictatorially. "Only" (lowering her little voice very suddenly), "if he is naughty and won't, why then we had better go to him; for he amuses me."

"As you please," said Mrs. Gaunt; and sent her husband this reply:

"SIR,—Rose and I are agreed to defer to your judgment and obey your wishes. Be pleased to let me know what day you will require us; and I must trouble you to send a carriage. I am, sir, your faithful wife and humble servant,
"CATHARINE GAUNT."

At the appointed day, a carriage and four came wheeling up to the door. The vehicle was gorgeously emblazoned, and the servants in rich liveries; all which finery glittering in the sun, and the glossy coats of the horses, did mightily please Mistress Rose. She stood on the stone steps, and clapped her hands with delight. Her mother just sighed, and said, "Ay, 'tis in pomp and show we must seek our happiness now."

She leaned back in the carriage and closed her eyes, yet not so close but now and then a tear would steal out as she thought of the past.

They drove up under an avenue to a noble mansion, and landed at the foot of some marble steps, low and narrow, but of vast breadth.

As they mounted these, a hall door, through which the carriage could have passed, was flung open, and discovered the servants all drawn up to do honor to their mistress.

She entered the hall leading Rose by the hand; the servants bowed and courtesied down to the ground.

She received this homage with dignified courtesy, and her eye stole round to see if the master of the house was coming to receive her.

The library door was opened hastily, and out came to meet her—Father Francis.

"Welcome, madam, a thousand times welcome to your new home," said he, in a stentorian voice, with a double infusion of geniality. "I claim the honor of showing you your part of the house, though 'tis all yours for that matter." And he led the way.

Now this cheerful stentorian voice was just a little shaky for once, and his eyes were moist.

Mrs. Gaunt noticed, but said nothing before the people. She smiled graciously, and accompanied him.

He took her to her apartments. They consisted of a *salle-à-manger*, three delightful bedrooms, a boudoir, and a magnificent drawing-room, fifty feet long, with two fireplaces, and a bay-window thirty feet wide, filled with the choicest flowers.

An exclamation of delight escaped Mrs. Gaunt. Then she said, "One would think I was a queen." Then she sighed, "Ah!" said she, "'tis a fine thing to be rich." Then, despondently, "Tell him I think it very beautiful."

"Nay, madam, I hope you will tell him so yourself."

Mrs. Gaunt made no reply to that; she added, "And it was kind of him to have you here the first day: I do not feel so lonely as I should without you."

She took Griffith at his word, and lived with Rose in her own apartments.

For some time Griffith used to slip away whenever he saw her coming.

One day she caught him at it, and beckoned him.

He came to her.

"You need not run away from me," said she. "I did not come into your house to quarrel with you. Let us be *friends*." And she gave him her hand sweetly enough, but oh! so coldly.

"I hope for nothing more," said Griffith. "If you ever have a wish, give me the pleasure of gratifying it—that is all."

"I wish to retire to a convent," said she, quietly.

"And desert your daughter?"

"I would leave her behind, to remind you of days gone by."

By degrees they saw a little more of one another; they even dined together now and then. But it brought them no nearer. There was no anger, with its loving reaction. They were friendly enough, but an icy barrier stood between them.

One person set himself quietly to sap this barrier. Father Francis was often at the castle, and played the peace-maker very adroitly.

The line he took might be called the innocent Jesuitical. He saw that it would be useless to exhort these two persons to ignore the terrible things that happened, and to make it up as if it was only a squabble. What he did was to repeat to the husband every gracious word the wife let fall, and *vice versa*, and to suppress all either said that might tend to estrange them.

In short, he acted the part of Mr. Harmony in the play, and acted it to perfection.

Gutta cavat lapidem.

Though no perceptible effect followed his efforts, yet there is no doubt that he got rid of some of the bitterness. But the coldness remained.

One day he was sent for all in a hurry by Griffith.

He found him looking gloomy and agitated.

The cause came out directly. Griffith had observed at last, what all the females in the house had seen two months ago, that Mrs. Gaunt was in the family-way.

He now communicated this to Father Francis with a voice of agony, and looks to match.

"All the better, my son," said the genial priest; "'twill be another tie between you. I hope it will be a fine boy to inherit your estates." Then, observing a certain hideous expression distorting Griffith's face, he fixed his eyes full on him, and said, sternly, "Are you not cured yet of that madness of yours?"

"No, no, no," said Griffith, deprecatingly; "but why did she not tell me?"

"You had better ask her."

"Not I. She will remind me I am nothing to her now. And, though 'tis so, yet I would not hear it from her lips."

In spite of this wise resolution, the torture he

was in drove him to remonstrate with her on her silence.

She blushed high, and excused herself as follows:

"I should have told you as soon as I knew it myself, but you were not with me. I was all by myself—in Carlisle jail."

This reply, uttered with hypocritical meekness, went through Griffith like a knife. He turned white, and gasped for breath, but said nothing. He left her with a deep groan, and never ventured to mention the matter again.

All he did in that direction was to redouble his attentions and solicitude for her health.

The relation between these two was now more anomalous than ever.

Even Father Francis, who had seen strange things in families, used to watch Mrs. Gaunt rise from table and walk heavily to the door, and her husband dart to it and open it obsequiously, and receive only a very formal reverence in return, and wonder how all this was to end.

However, under this icy surface, a change was gradually going on; and one afternoon, to his great surprise, Mrs. Gaunt's maid came to ask Griffith if he would come to Mrs. Gaunt's apartment.

He found her seated in her bay window, among her flowers. She seemed another woman all of a sudden, and smiled on him her exquisite smile of days gone by.

"Come, sit beside me," said she, "in this beautiful window that you have given me."

"Sit beside you, Kate," said Griffith; "nay, let me kneel at your knees; that is my place."

"As you will," said she, softly, and continued, in the same tone, "Now listen to me: you and I are two fools; we have been very happy together in days gone by, and we should both of us like to try again, but we neither of us know how to begin. You are afraid to tell me you love me, and I am ashamed to own to you or any body else that I love you, in spite of it all—I do, though."

"You love me! a wretch like me, Kate? 'Tis impossible. I can not be so happy!"

"Child," said Mrs. Gaunt, "love is not reason; love is not common sense. 'Tis a passion, like your jealousy, poor fool. I love you, as a mother loves her child, all the more for all you have made me suffer. I might not say as much if I thought we should be long together; but something tells me I shall die this time: I never felt so before. I want you to bury me at Hershaw. After all, I spent more happy years there than most wives ever know. I see you are very sorry for what you have done. How could I die and leave thee in doubt of my forgiveness and my love? Kiss me, poor jealous fool, for I do forgive thee, and love thee with all my sorrowful heart." And even with the words she bowed herself and sank quietly into his arms, and he kissed her and cried bitterly over her—bitterly. But she was comparatively calm; for she said to herself, "The end is at hand."

Griffith, instead of pooh-poohing his wife's forebodings, set himself to baffle them.

He used his wealth freely; and, besides the country doctor, had two very eminent practitioners from London, one of whom was a gray-headed man, the other singularly young for the fame

he had obtained. But then he was a genuine enthusiast in his art.

CHAPTER XLVI.

GRIFFITH, white as a ghost, and unable to shake off the forebodings Catharine had communicated to him, walked incessantly up and down the room; and, at his earnest request, one or other of the four doctors in attendance was constantly coming to him with information.

The case proceeded favorably, and, to Griffith's surprise and joy, a healthy boy was born about two o'clock in the morning. The mother was reported rather feverish, but nothing to cause alarm.

Griffith threw himself on two chairs and fell fast asleep.

Toward morning he found himself shaken, and there was Ashley, the young doctor, standing beside him, with a very grave face. Griffith started up, and cried, "What is wrong, in God's name?"

"I am sorry to say there has been a sudden hemorrhage, and the patient is much exhausted." "She is dying! she is dying!" cried Griffith, in anguish.

"Not dying. But she will infallibly sink unless some unusual circumstance occur to sustain vitality."

Griffith laid hold of him. "Oh, sir, take my whole fortune, but save her! save her! save her!"

"Mr. Gaunt," said the young doctor, "be calm, or you will make matters worse. There is one chance to save her, but my professional brethren are prejudiced against it. However, they have consented, at my earnest request, to refer my proposal to you. She is sinking for want of blood: if you consent to my opening a vein and transfusing healthy blood from a living subject into hers, I will undertake the operation. You had better come and see her; you will be more able to judge."

"Let me lean on you," said Griffith. And the strong wrestler went tottering up the stairs. There they showed him poor Kate, white as the bedclothes, breathing hard, and with a pulse that hardly moved.

Griffith looked at her, horror-struck.

"Death has got hold of my darling," he screamed. "Snatch her away! for God's sake, snatch her from him!"

The young doctor whipped off his coat and bared his arm.

"There," he cried, "Mr. Gaunt consents. Now, Corrie, be quick with the lancet, and hold this tube as I tell you; warm it first in that water."

Here came an interruption. Griffith Gaunt gripped the young doctor's arm, and with an agonized and ugly expression of countenance cried out, "What! *your* blood! What right have you to lose blood for her?"

"The right of a man who loves his art better than his blood," cried Ashley, with enthusiasm.

Griffith tore off his coat and waistcoat, and bared his arm to the elbow. "Take every drop I have. No man's blood shall enter her veins but mine." And the creature seemed to swell to double his size, as with flushed cheek and

sparkling eyes he held out a bare arm, corded like a blacksmith's, and white as a duchess's.

The young doctor eyed the magnificent limb a moment with rapture, then fixed his apparatus, and performed an operation which then, as now, was impossible in theory—only he did it. He sent some of Griffith Gaunt's bright red blood smoking hot into Kate Gaunt's veins.

This done, he watched his patient closely, and administered stimulants from time to time.

She hung between life and death for hours. But at noon next day she spoke, and, seeing Griffith sitting beside her, pale with anxiety and loss of blood, she said, "My dear, do not thou fret. I died last night. I knew I should. But they gave me another life, and now I shall live to a hundred."

They showed her the little boy, and at sight of him the whole woman made up her mind to live.

And live she did; and, what is very remarkable, her convalescence was more rapid than on any former occasion.

It was from a talkative nurse she first learned that Griffith had given his blood for her. She said nothing at the time, but lay with an angelic, happy smile, thinking of it.

The first time she saw him after that, she laid her hand on his arm, and, looking Heaven itself into his eyes, she said, "My life is very dear to me now; 'tis a present from thee."

She wanted a good excuse for loving him as frankly as before, and now he had given her one. She used to throw it in his teeth in the prettiest way. Whenever she confessed a fault, she was sure to turn slyly round and say, "But what could one expect of me? I have his blood in my veins."

But once she told Father Francis, quite seriously, that she had never been quite the same woman since she lived by Griffith's blood; she was turned jealous; and, moreover, it had given him a fascinating power over her, and she could tell blindfold when he was in the room, which last fact, indeed, she once proved by actual experiment. But all this I leave to such as study the occult sciences in this profound age of ours.

Starting with this advantage, Time, the great curer, gradually healed a wound that looked incurable.

Mrs. Gaunt became a better wife than she had ever been before. She studied her husband, and found he was not hard to please. She made his home bright and genial, and so he never went abroad for the sunshine he could have at home.

And he studied her; he added a chapel to the house, and easily persuaded Francis to become the chaplain. Thus they had a peacemaker and a friend in the house, and a man severe in morals, but candid in religion, and an inexhaustible companion to them and their children.

And so, after that terrible storm, this pair pursued the even tenor of a peaceful united life, till the olive branches rising around them, and the happy years gliding on, almost obliterated that one dark passage, and made it seem a mere fantastical, incredible dream.

Mercy Vint and her child went home in the coach. It was empty at starting, and, as Mrs. Gaunt had foretold, a great sense of desolation fell upon her.

She leaned back, and the patient tears coursed steadily down her comely cheeks.

At the first stage a passenger got down from the outside and entered the coach.

"What! George Neville!" said Mercy.

"The same," said he.

She expressed her surprise that he should be going her way.

"'Tis strange," said he, "but to me most agreeable."

"And to me too, for that matter," said she.

Sir George observed her eyes were red, and, to divert her mind and keep up her spirits, launched into a flow of small talk.

In the midst of it, Mercy leaned back in the coach and began to cry bitterly. So much for that mode of consolation.

Upon this he faced the situation, and begged her not to grieve. He praised the good action she had done, and told her how every body admired her for it, especially himself.

At that she gave him her hand in silence, and turned away her pretty head. He carried her hand respectfully to his lips, and his manly heart began to yearn over this suffering virtue, so grave, so dignified, so meek. He was no longer a young man; he began to talk to her like a friend. This tone, and the soft, sympathetic voice in which a gentleman speaks to a woman in trouble, unlocked her heart, and for the first time in her life she was led to talk about herself.

She opened her heart to him. She told him she was not the woman to pine for any man. Her youth, her health, and love of occupation would carry her through. What she mourned was the loss of esteem, and the blot upon her child. At that she drew the baby with inexpressible tenderness, and yet with a half defiant air, closer to her bosom.

Sir George assured her she would lose the esteem of none but fools. "As for me," said he, "I always respected you, but now I revere you. You are a martyr and an angel."

"George," said Mercy, gravely, "be you my friend, not my enemy."

"Why, madam," said he, "sure you can't think me such a wretch."

"I mean, our flatterers are our enemies."

Sir George took the hint, given, as it was, very gravely and decidedly, and henceforth showed her his respect by his acts: he paid her as much attention as if she had been a princess. He handed her out and handed her in, and coaxed her to eat here and to drink there; and at the inn where the passengers slept for the night, he showed his long purse, and secured her superior comforts. Console her he could not, but he broke the sense of utter desolation and loneliness with which she started from Carlisle. She told him so in the inn, and descanted on the goodness of God, who had sent her a friend in that bitter hour.

"You have been very kind to me, George," said she. "Now Heaven bless you for it, and give you many happy days, and well spent."

This, from one who never said a word she did not mean, sank deep into Sir George's heart, and he went to sleep thinking of her, and asking himself was there nothing he could do for her.

Next morning Sir George handed Mercy and her babe into the coach, and the villain tried an experiment to see what value she set on him.

He did not get in, so Mercy thought she had seen the last of him.

"Farewell good, kind George," said she; "alas! there's naught but meeting and parting in this weary world."

The tears stood in her sweet eyes, and she thanked him, not with words only, but with the soft pressure of her womanly hand.

He slipped up behind the coach, and was ashamed of himself, and his heart warmed to her more and more.

As soon as the coach stopped, my lord opened the door for Mercy to alight. Her eyes were very red, he saw that. She started, and beamed with surprise and pleasure.

"Why, I thought I had lost you for good," said she. "Whither are you going—to Lancaster?"

"Not quite so far. I am going to the 'Pack-horse.'"

Mercy opened her eyes and blushed high. Sir George saw, and, to divert her suspicions, told her merrily to beware of making objections. "I am only a sort of servant in the matter. 'Twas Mrs. Gaunt ordered me."

"I might have guessed it," said Mercy. "Bless her, she knew I should be lonely."

"She was not easy till she had got rid of me, I assure you," said Sir George; "so let us make the best on't, for she is a lady that likes to have her own way."

"She is a noble creature. George, I shall never regret any thing I have done for her. And she will not be ungrateful. Oh, the sting of ingratitude! I have felt that. Have you?"

"No," said Sir George, "I have escaped that by never doing any good actions."

"I doubt you are telling me a lie," said Mercy Vint.

She now looked upon Sir George as Mrs. Gaunt's representative, and prattled freely to him. Only now and then her trouble came over her, and then she took a quiet cry without ceremony.

As for Sir George, he sat and studied, and wondered at her.

Never in his life had he met such a woman as this, who was as candid with him as if he had been a woman. She seemed to have a window in her bosom, through which he looked, and saw the pure and lovely soul within.

In the afternoon they reached a little town whence a cart conveyed them to the "Pack-horse."

Here Mercy Vint disappeared, and busied herself with Sir George's comforts.

He sat by himself in the parlor, and missed his gentle companion.

In the morning Mercy thought of course he would go. But instead of that, he staid, and followed her about, and began to court her downright. But the warmer he got, the cooler she. And at last she said, mighty dryly, "This is a very dull place for the likes of you."

"'Tis the sweetest place in England," said he, "at least to me, for it contains—the woman I love."

Mercy drew back, and colored rosy red. "I hope not," said she.

"I loved you the first day I saw you and heard your voice; and now I love you ten times more. Let me dry thy tears forever, sweet Mercy. Be my wife."

"You are mad," said Mercy. "What! would you wed a woman in my condition? I am more your friend than to take you at your word. And what do you think I am made of, to go from one man to another, like that?"

"Take your time, sweetheart, only give me your hand."

Sir George turned pale. "One word: do you love him?"

"I have a regard for him."

"Do you love him?"

"Hardly; but I wronged him, and I owe him amends. I shall pay my debt."

Sir George bowed, and retired sick at heart

"As soon as the coach stopped, my lord opened the door for Mercy to alight."



Page 140.

"George," said Mercy, very gravely, "I am beholden to you, but my duty it lies another way. There is a young man in these parts (Sir George groaned) that was my follower for two years and better. I wronged him for one I never name now. I must marry that poor lad and make him happy, or else live and die as I am."

and deeply mortified. Mercy looked after him and sighed.

Next day, as he walked disconsolate up and down, she came to him and gave him her hand. "You were a good friend to me that bitter day," said she, "now let me be yours. Do not bide here; 'twill but vex you."

"I am going, madam," said Sir George, stiffly. "I but wait to see the man you prefer to me. If he is not too unworthy of you, I'll go, and trouble you no more. I have learned his name."

Mercy blushed, for she knew Paul Carrick would bear no comparison with George Neville.

The next day Sir George took leave to observe that this Paul Carrick did not seem to appreciate her preference so highly as he ought. "I understand he has never been here."

Mercy colored, but made no reply, and Sir George was sorry he had taunted her. He followed her about, and showed her great attention, but not a word of love.

There were fine trout streams in the neighborhood, and he busied himself fishing, and in the evening read aloud to Mercy, and waited to see Paul Carrick.

Paul never came; and, from a word Mercy let drop, he saw that she was mortified. Then, being no tyro in love, he told her he had business in Lancaster, and must leave her for a few days, but he would return, and by that time, perhaps, Paul Carrick would be visible.

Now his main object was to try the effect of correspondence.

Every day he sent her a long love-letter from Lancaster.

Paul Carrick, who, in absenting himself for a time, had acted upon his sister's advice rather than his own natural impulse, learned that Mercy received a letter every day. This was a thing unheard of in that parish.

So then Paul defied his sister's advice, and presented himself to Mercy, when the following dialogue took place:

"Welcome home, Mercy."

"Thank you, Paul."

"Well, I'm single still, lass."

"So I hear."

"I'm come to say, let by-gones be by-gones."

"So be it," said Mercy, dryly.

"You have tried a gentleman, now try a farmer."

"I have; and he did not stand the test."

"Anan."

"Why did you not come near me for ten days?"

Paul blushed up to the eyes. "Well," said he, "I'll tell you the truth. 'Twas our Jess advised me to leave you quiet just at first."

"Ay, ay. I was to be humbled, and made to smart for my fault, and then I should be thankful to take you. My lad, if ever you should be really in love, take a friend's advice: listen to your own heart, and not to shallow advisers. You have mortified a poor sorrowful creature who was going to make a sacrifice for you, and you have lost her forever."

"What d'ye mean?"

"I mean that ye are to think no more of Mercy Vint."

"Then it is true, ye jade—ye've gotten a fresh lover already."

"Say no more than you know. If you were the only man on earth, I would not wed you, Paul Carrick."

Paul Carrick retired home and blew up his sister, and told her that she had "gotten him the sack again."

The next day Sir George came back from Lan-

caster, and Mercy lowered her lashes for once at sight of him.

"Well," said he, "has this Carrick shown a sense of your goodness?"

"He has come—and gone."

She then, with her usual frankness, told him what had passed. "And," said she, with a smile, "you are partly to blame, for how could I help comparing your behavior to me with his?"

You came to my side when I was in trouble, and showed me respect when I expected scorn from all the world. A friend in need is a friend indeed."

"Reward me! reward me!" said Sir George, gayly; "you know the way."

"Nay, but I am too much *your* friend," said Mercy.

"Be less my friend, then, and more my darling."

He pressed her, he urged her, he stuck to her, he pestered her.

She snubbed, and evaded, and parried, and liked him all the better for his pestering her.

At last, one day, she said, "If Mrs. Gaunt thinks it will be for your happiness, I *will*—in six months' time; but you shall not marry in haste to repent at leisure. And I must have time to learn two things—whether you can be constant to a simple woman like me, and whether I can love again as tenderly as you deserve to be loved."

All his endeavors to shake this determination were vain. Mercy Vint had a terrible deal of quiet resolution.

He retired to Cumberland, and in a long letter asked Mrs. Gaunt's advice. She replied characteristically. She began very soberly to say that she should be the last to advise a marriage between persons of different conditions in life. "But then," said she, "this Mercy is altogether an exception. If a flower grows on a dunghill, 'tis still a flower, and not a part of the dunghill. She has the essence of gentility, and, indeed, her *manners* are better bred than most of our ladies. There is too much affectation abroad, and that is your true vulgarity. Tack 'my lady' on to 'Mercy Vint,' and that dignified and quiet simplicity of hers will carry her with credit through every court in Europe. Then think of her virtues—(here the writer began to lose her temper)—where can you hope to find such another? She is a moral genius, and acts well, no matter under what temptation, as surely as Claude and Raphael paint well. Why, sir, what do you seek in a wife? Wealth? title? family? But you possess them already; you want something in addition that will make you happy. Well, take that angelic goodness into your house, and you will find, by your own absolute happiness, how ill your neighbors have wived. For my part, I see but one objection—the child. Well, if you are man enough to take the mother, I am woman enough to take the babe. In one word, he who has the sense to fall in love with such an angel, and has not the sense to marry it, if he can, is a fool."

"Postscript.—My poor friend, to what end think you I sent you down in the coach with her?"

Sir George, thus advised, acted as he would have done had the advice been just the opposite.

He sent Mercy a love-letter by every post, and

he often received one in return; only his were passionate, and hers gentle and affectionate.

But one day came a letter that was a mere cry of distress.

“George, my child is dying. What shall I do?”

He mounted his horse and rode to her.

He came too late. The little boy had died suddenly of croup, and was to be buried next morning.

The poor mother received him up stairs, and her grief was terrible. She clung sobbing to him, and could not be comforted. Yet she felt his coming. But a mother's anguish overpowered all.

Crushed by this fearful blow, her strength gave way for a time, and she clung to George Neville, and told him she had nothing left but him, and one day implored him not to die and leave her.

Sir George said all he could think of to comfort her, and at the end of a fortnight persuaded her to leave the “Packhorse” and England as his wife.

She had little power to resist now, and, indeed, little inclination.

They were married by special license, and spent a twelvemonth abroad.

At the end of that time they returned to Neville's Court, and Mercy took her place there with the same dignified simplicity that had adorned her in a humbler station.

Sir George had given her no lessons, but she had observed closely for his sake; and, being already well educated, and very quick and docile, she seldom made him blush except with pride.

They were the happiest pair in Cumberland. Her merciful nature now found a larger field for its exercise, and, backed by her husband's purse, she became the Lady Bountiful of the parish and the county.

The day after she reached Neville's Court

came an exquisite letter to her from Mrs. Gaunt. She sent an affectionate reply.

But the Gaunts and the Nevilles did not meet in society.

Sir George Neville and Mrs. Gaunt, being both singularly brave and haughty people, rather despised this arrangement. But it seems that, one day, when they were all four in the Town Hall, folk whispered and looked; and both Griffith Gaunt and Lady Neville surprised these glances, and determined, by one impulse, it should never happen again. Hence it was quite understood that the Nevilles and the Gaunts were not to be asked to the same party or ball.

The wives, however, corresponded, and Lady Neville easily induced Mrs. Gaunt to co-operate with her in her benevolent acts, especially in saving young women who had been betrayed from sinking deeper.

Living a good many miles apart, Lady Neville could send her stray sheep to service near Mrs. Gaunt, and *vice versa*; and so, merciful, but discriminating, they saved many a poor girl who had been weak, not wicked.

So then, though they could not eat nor dance together in earthly mansions, they could do good together; and, methinks, in the eternal world, where years of social intercourse will prove less than cobwebs, these their joint acts of mercy will be links of a bright, strong chain, to bind their souls in everlasting amity.

It was a remarkable circumstance that the one child of Lady Neville's unhappy marriage died, but her nine children by Sir George all grew to goodly men and women. That branch of the Nevilles became remarkable for high principle and good sense, and this they owe to Mercy Vint, and to Sir George's courage in marrying her. This Mercy was granddaughter to one of Cromwell's Ironsides, and brought her rare personal merit into their house, and also the best blood of the old Puritans, than which there is no blood in Europe more rich in male courage, female chastity, and all the virtues.

THE END.



FOUL PLAY.

A Novel.

BY

CHARLES READE,

AUTHOR OF "WHITE LIES," "LOVE ME LITTLE, LOVE ME LONG," "IT IS NEVER TOO LATE
TO MEND," "HARD CASH," "GRIFFITH GAUNT; OR, JEALOUSY," "PEG
WOFFINGTON," "CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE," ETC.,

AND

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FOUL PLAY.

CHAPTER I.

THERE are places which appear at first sight inaccessible to romance; and such a place was Mr. Wardlaw's dining-room in Russell Square. It was very large, had sickly green walls, picked out with aldermen, full length; heavy maroon curtains; mahogany chairs; a turkey carpet an inch thick; and was lighted with wax candles only.

In the centre, bristling and gleaming with silver and glass, was a round table, at which fourteen could have dined comfortably; and at opposite sides of this table sat two gentlemen, who looked as neat, grave, precise, and unromantic, as the place; Merchant Wardlaw and his son.

Wardlaw senior was an elderly man, tall, thin, iron-gray, with a round head, a short, thick neck, a good, brown eye, a square jaw that betokened resolution, and a complexion so sallow as to be almost cadaverous. Hard as iron: but a certain stiff dignity and respectability sat upon him, and became him.

Arthur Wardlaw resembled his father in figure, but his mother in face. He had, and has, hay-colored hair, a forehead singularly white and delicate, pale blue eyes, largish ears, finely chiselled features, the under lip much shorter than the upper; his chin oval and pretty, but somewhat receding; his complexion beautiful. In short, what nineteen people out of twenty would call a handsome young man, and think they had described him.

Both the Wardlaws were in full dress, according to the invariable custom of the house; and sat in a dead silence, that seemed natural to the great, sober room.

This, however, was not for want of a topic; on the contrary, they had a matter of great importance to discuss, and in fact this was why they dined *tête-à-tête*; but their tongues were tied for the present; in the first place, there stood in the middle of the table an *épergne*, the size of a Putney laurel-tree; neither Wardlaw could well see the other without craning out his neck like a rifleman from behind his tree; and then there were three live suppressors of confidential intercourse—two gorgeous footmen, and a sombre, sublime, and, in one word, episcopal, butler; all three went about as softly as cats after a robin, and conjured one plate away, and smoothly insinuated another, and seemed models of grave discretion: but were known to be all ears, and bound by a secret oath to carry down each crumb of dialogue to the servants' hall, for curious dissection and boisterous ridicule.

At last, however, those three smug hypocrites retired, and, by good luck, transferred their suffocating *épergne* to the sideboard; so then father and son looked at one another with that conscious air which naturally precedes a topic of interest; and Wardlaw senior invited his son to try a certain decanter of rare old port, by way of preliminary.

While the young man fills his glass, hurl we in his antecedents.

At school till fifteen, and then clerk in his father's office till twenty-two, and showed an aptitude so remarkable, that John Wardlaw, who was getting tired, determined, sooner or later, to put the reins of government into his hands. But he conceived a desire that the future head of his office should be a University man. So he announced his resolution, and to Oxford went young Wardlaw, though he had not looked at Greek or Latin for seven years. He was, however, furnished with a private tutor, under whom he recovered lost ground rapidly. The Reverend Robert Penfold was a first-class man, and had the gift of teaching. The house of Wardlaw had peculiar claims on him, for he was the son of old Michael Penfold, Wardlaw's cashier; he learned from young Wardlaw the stake he was playing for, and, instead of merely giving him one hour's lecture per day, as he did to his other pupils, he used to come to his rooms at all hours, and force him to read, by reading with him. He also stood his friend in a serious emergency. Young Wardlaw, you must know, was blessed or cursed with Mimicry; his powers in that way really seemed to have no limit, for he could imitate any sound you liked with his voice, and any form with his pen or pencil. Now, we promise you, he was one man under his father's eye, and another down at Oxford; so, one night, this gentleman, being warm with wine, opens his window, and, seeing a group of undergraduates chattering and smoking in the quadrangle, imitates the peculiar grating tones of Mr. Champion, vice-president of the college, and gives them various reasons why they ought to disperse to their rooms and study. "But, perhaps," says he, in conclusion, "you are too blind drunk to read Bosh in crooked letters by candle-light? In that case—" And he then gave them some very naughty advice how to pass the evening; still in the exact tones of Mr. Champion, who was a very, very strict moralist; and this unexpected sally of wit caused shrieks of laughter, and mightily tickled all the hearers, except Champion *ipse*, who was listening and disapproving at another window. He complained to the president. Then the ingenious

Wardlaw, not having come down to us in a direct line from Bayard, committed a great mistake,—he denied it.

It was brought home to him, and the president, who had laughed in his sleeve at the practical joke, looked very grave at the falsehood; Rustication was talked of, and even Expulsion. Then Wardlaw came sorrowfully to Penfold, and said to him, "I must have been awfully cut, for I don't remember all that; I had been wining at Christchurch. I do remember slanging the fellows, but how can I tell what I said? I say, old fellow, it will be a bad job for me if they expel me, or even rusticate me; my father will never forgive me; I shall be his clerk, but never his partner; and then he will find out what a lot I owe down here. I'm done for! I'm done for!"

Penfold uttered not a word, but grasped his hand, and went off to the president, and said his pupil had wined at Christchurch, and could not be expected to remember minutely. Mimicry was, unfortunately, a habit with him. He then pleaded for the milder construction, with such zeal and eloquence that the high-minded scholar he was addressing admitted that construction was possible, and therefore must be received. So the affair ended in a written apology to Mr. Champion, which had all the smoothness and neatness of a merchant's letter. Arthur Wardlaw was already a master in that style.

Six months after this, and one fortnight before the actual commencement of our tale, Arthur Wardlaw, well crammed by Penfold, went up for his final examination, throbbing with anxiety. He passed; and was so grateful to his tutor that, when the advowson of a small living near Oxford came into the market, he asked Wardlaw senior to lend Robert Penfold a sum of money, much more than was needed: and Wardlaw senior declined without a moment's hesitation.

This slight sketch will serve as a key to the dialogue it has postponed, and to subsequent incidents.

"Well, Arthur, and so you have really taken your degree?"

"No, sir; but I have passed my examination: the degree follows as a matter of course,—that is a mere question of fees."

"Oh! Then now I have something to say to you. Try one more glass of the '47 port. Stop, you'll excuse me; I am a man of business; I don't doubt your word; Heaven forbid! but, do you happen to have any document you can produce in further confirmation of what you state; namely, that you have passed your final examination at the University?"

"Certainly, sir," replied young Wardlaw. "My Testamur."

"What is that?"

The young gentleman put his hand in his pocket, and produced his Testamur, or "We bear witness;" a short printed document in Latin, which may be thus translated:—

"We bear witness that Arthur Wardlaw, of St. Luke's College, has answered our questions in humane letters.

"GEORGE RICHARDSON,

"ARTHUR SMYTHE,

"EDWARD MERIVALE,

"Examiners."

Wardlaw senior took it, laid it beside him on the table, inspected it with his double eye-glass, and, not knowing a word of Latin, was mightily impressed, and his respect for his son rose 40 or 45 per cent.

"Very well, sir," said he. "Now listen to me. Perhaps it was an old man's fancy; but I have often seen in the world what a stamp these Universities put upon a man. To send you back from commerce to Latin and Greek, at two-and-twenty, was trying you rather hard; it was trying you doubly; your obedience, and your ability into the bargain. Well, sir, you have stood the trial, and I am proud of you. And so now it is my turn: from this day and from this hour, look on yourself as my partner in the old-established house of Wardlaw. My balance-sheet shall be prepared immediately, and the partnership deed drawn. You will enter on a flourishing concern, sir; and you will virtually conduct it, in written communication with me; for I have had five-and-forty years of it: and then my liver, you know! Watson advises me strongly to leave my desk, and try country air, and rest from business and its cares."

He paused a moment; and the young man drew a long breath, like one who was in the act of being relieved of some terrible weight.

As for the old gentleman, he was not observing his son just then, but thinking of his own career; a certain expression of pain and regret came over his features: but he shook it off with manly dignity. "Come, come," said he, "this is the law of Nature, and must be submitted to with a good grace. Wardlaw junior, fill your glass." At the same time he stood up and said, stoutly, "The setting sun drinks to the rising sun;" but could not maintain that artificial style, and ended with, "God bless you, my boy, and may you stick to business; avoid speculation, as I have done; and so hand the concern down healthy to your son, as my father there (pointing to a picture) handed it down to me, and I to you."

His voice wavered slightly in uttering this benediction; but only for a moment: he then sat quietly down, and sipped his wine composedly.

Not so the other: his color came and went violently all the time his father was speaking, and, when he ceased, he sank into his chair with another sigh deeper than the last, and two half-hysterical tears came to his pale eyes.

But presently, feeling he was expected to say something, he struggled against all this mysterious emotion, and faltered out that he should not fear the responsibility, if he might have constant recourse to his father for advice.

"Why, of course," was the reply. "My country house is but a mile from the station: you can telegraph for me in any case of importance."

"When would you wish me to commence my new duties?"

"Let me see, it will take six weeks to prepare a balance-sheet, such as I could be content to submit to an incoming partner. Say two months."

Young Wardlaw's countenance fell.

"Meantime you shall travel on the Continent and enjoy yourself."

"Thank you," said young Wardlaw, mechanically, and fell into a brown study.

The room now returned to what seemed its natural state. And its silence continued until it was broken from without.

A sharp knocking was heard at the street door, and resounded across the marble hall.

The Wardlaws looked at one another in some little surprise.

"I have invited nobody," said the elder.

Some time elapsed, and then a footman made his appearance, and brought in a card.

"Mr. Christopher Adams."

Now that Mr. Christopher Adams should call on John Wardlaw, in his private room, at nine o'clock in the evening, seemed to that merchant irregular, presumptuous, and monstrous. "Tell him he will find me at my place of business to-morrow, as usual," said he, knitting his brows.

The footman went off with this message; and, soon after, raised voices were heard in the hall, and the episcopal butler entered the room with an injured countenance.

"He says he *must* see you; he is in great anxiety."

"Yes, I am in great anxiety," said a quavering voice at his elbow; and Mr. Adams actually pushed by the butler, and stood, hat in hand, in those sacred precincts. "Pray excuse me, sir," said he, "but it is very serious; I can't be easy in my mind till I have put you a question."

"This is very extraordinary conduct, sir," said Mr. Wardlaw. "Do you think I do business here, and at all hours?"

"Oh no, sir: it is my own business. I am come to ask you a very serious question. I couldn't wait till morning with such a doubt on my mind."

"Well, sir, I repeat this is irregular and extraordinary; but as you are here, pray what is the matter?" He then dismissed the lingering butler with a look. Mr. Adams cast uneasy glances on young Wardlaw.

"Oh," said the elder, "you can speak before him. This is my partner; that is to say, he will be as soon as the balance-sheet can be prepared, and the deed drawn. Wardlaw junior, this is Mr. Adams, a very respectable bill-discounter."

The two men bowed to each other, and Arthur Wardlaw sat down motionless.

"Sir, did you draw a note of hand to-day?" inquired Adams of the elder merchant.

"I dare say I did. Did you discount one signed by me?"

"Yes, sir, we did."

"Well, sir, you have only to present it at maturity. Wardlaw and Son will provide for it, I dare say." This with the lofty nonchalance of a rich man, who had never broken an engagement in his life.

"Ah! that I know they will if it is all right; but suppose it is not?"

"What d'ye mean?" asked Wardlaw, with some astonishment.

"Oh, nothing, sir! It bears your signature, that is good for twenty times the amount; and it is indorsed by your cashier. Only what makes me a little uneasy, your bills used to be always on your own forms, and so I told my partner; he discounted it. Gentlemen, I wish you would just look at it."

"Of course we will look at it. Show it Arthur first; his eyes are younger than mine."

Mr. Adams took out a large bill-book, extracted the note of hand, and passed it across the table to Wardlaw junior. He took it up with a sort

of shiver, and bent his head very low over it; then handed it back in silence.

Adams took it to Wardlaw senior, and laid it before him, by the side of Arthur's Testamur.

The merchant inspected it with his glasses.

"The writing is mine, apparently."

"I am very glad of it," said the bill-broker, eagerly.

"Stop a bit," said Mr. Wardlaw. "Why, what is this? For two thousand pounds! and, as you say, not my form. I have signed no note for two thousand pounds this week. Dated yesterday. You have not cashed it, I hope?"

"I am sorry to say my partner has."

"Well, sir, not to keep you in suspense, the thing is not worth the stamp it is written on."

"Mr. Wardlaw!—sir!—good heavens! Then it is as I feared. It is a forgery."

"I should be puzzled to find any other name for it. You need not look so pale, Arthur. We can't help some clever scoundrel imitating our hands; and as for you, Adams, you ought to have been more cautious."

"But, sir, your cashier's name is Penfold," faltered the holder, clinging to a straw. "May he not have drawn—is the indorsement forged as well?"

Mr. Wardlaw examined the back of the bill, and looked puzzled. "No," said he. "My cashier's name is Michael Penfold, but this is indorsed 'Robert Penfold.' Do you hear, Arthur? Why, what is the matter with you? You look like a ghost. I say there is your tutor's name at the back of this forged note. This is very strange. Just look, and tell me who wrote these two words 'Robert Penfold?'"

Young Wardlaw took the document, and tried to examine it calmly, but it shook visibly in his hand, and a cold moisture gathered on his brow. His pale eyes roved to and fro in a very remarkable way; and he was so long before he said anything, that both the other persons present began to eye him with wonder.

At last he faltered out, "This 'Robert Penfold' seems to me very like his own handwriting. But then the rest of the writing is equally like yours, sir. I am sure Robert Penfold never did any thing wrong. Mr. Adams, please oblige me. Let this go no further till I have seen him, and asked him whether he indorsed it."

"Now don't you be in a hurry," said the elder Wardlaw. "The first question is, who received the money?"

Mr. Adams replied that it was a respectable-looking man, a young clergyman.

"Ah!" said Wardlaw, with a world of meaning.

"Father!" said young Wardlaw, imploringly, "for my sake, say no more to-night." Robert Penfold is incapable of a dishonest act."

"It becomes your years to think so, young man. But I have lived long enough to see what crimes respectable men are betrayed into in the hour of temptation. And, now I think of it, this Robert Penfold is in want of money. Did he not ask me for a loan of two thousand pounds? Was not that the very sum? Can't you answer me? Why, the application came through you."

Receiving no reply from his son, but a sort of agonized stare, he took out his pencil and wrote down Robert Penfold's address. This he handed the bill-broker, and gave him some advice in a

whisper, which Mr. Christopher Adams received with a profusion of thanks, and bustled away, leaving Wardlaw senior excited and indignant, Wardlaw junior ghastly pale and almost stupefied.

Scarcely a word was spoken for some minutes, and then the younger man broke out suddenly: "Robert Penfold is the best friend I ever had; I should have been expelled but for him, and I should never have earned that Testamur but for him."

The old merchant interrupted him. "You exaggerate: but, to tell the truth, I am sorry now I did not lend him the money you asked for. For, mark my words, in a moment of temptation, that miserable young man has forged my name, and will be convicted of the felony, and punished accordingly."

"No, no; Oh, God forbid!" shrieked young Wardlaw. "I couldn't bear it. If he did, he must have intended to replace it. I must see him; I will see him directly." He got up all in a hurry, and was going to Penfold to warn him, and get him out of the way till the money should be replaced. But his father started up at the same moment and forbade him, in accents that he had never yet been able to resist.

"Sit down, sir, this instant," said the old man, with terrible sternness. "Sit down, I say, or you will never be a partner of mine. Justice must take its course. What business and what right have we to protect a felon? I would not take *your* part if you were one. Indeed it is too late now, for the detectives will be with him before you could reach him. I gave Adams his address."

At this last piece of information Wardlaw junior leaned his head on the table, and groaned aloud, and a cold perspiration gathered in beads upon his white forehead.

CHAPTER II.

THAT same evening sat over their tea, in Norfolk Street, Strand, another couple, who were also father and son; but, in this pair, the Wardlaws were reversed. Michael Penfold was a reverend, gentle creature, with white hair, blue eyes, and great timidity; why, if a stranger put to him a question, he used to look all round the room before he ventured to answer.

Robert, his son, was a young man, with a large brown eye, a mellow voice, square shoulders, and a prompt and vigorous manner. Cricketer. Scholar. Parson.

They were talking hopefully together over a living Robert was going to buy: it was near Oxford, he said, and would not prevent his continuing to take pupils. "But, father," said he, "it will be a place to take my wife to if I ever have one; and, meantime, I hope you will run down now and then, Saturday to Monday."

"That I will, Robert. Ah! how proud *she* would have been to hear you preach; it was always her dream, poor thing."

"Let us think *she* can hear me," said Robert. "And I have got *you* still; the proceeds of this living will help me to lodge you more comfortably."

"You are very good, Robert: I would rather see you spend it upon yourself; but, dear me,

what a manager you must be to dress so beautifully as you do, and send your old father presents as you do, and yet put by fourteen hundred pounds to buy this living."

"You are mistaken, sir, I have only saved four hundred; the odd thousand — But that is a secret for the present."

"Oh, I am not inquisitive: I never was."

They then chatted about things of no importance whatever, and the old gentleman was just lighting his candle to go to bed, when a visitor was ushered into the room.

The Penfolds looked a little surprised, but not much. They had no street-door all to themselves; no liveried dragons to interpose between them and unseasonable or unwelcome visitors.

The man was well-dressed, with one exception; he wore a gold chain. He had a hooked nose, and a black, piercing eye. He stood at the door and observed every person and thing in the room minutely before he spoke a word.

Then he said, quietly, "Mr. Michael Penfold, I believe."

"At your service, sir."

"And Mr. Robert Penfold."

"I am Robert Penfold. What is your business?"

"Pray is the 'Robert Penfold' at the back of this note your writing?"

"Certainly it is; they would not cash it without that."

"Oh, you got the money, then?"

"Of course I did."

"You have not parted with it, have you?"

"No."

"All the better." He then turned to Michael, and looked at him earnestly a moment. "The fact is, sir," said he, "there is a little irregularity about this bill, which must be explained, or your son might be called on to refund the cash."

"Irregularity about — a bill?" cried Michael Penfold, in dismay. "Who is the drawer? Let me see it. Oh dear me, something wrong about a bill indorsed by you, Robert?" and the old man began to shake himself.

"Why, father," said Robert, "what are you afraid of? If the bill is irregular, I can but return the money. It is in the house."

"The best way will be for Mr. Robert Penfold to go at once with me to the bill-broker; he lives but a few doors off. And you, sir, must stay here, and be responsible for the funds till we return."

Robert Penfold took his hat directly, and went off with this mysterious visitor.

They had not gone many steps, when Robert's companion stopped, and, getting in front of him, said, "We can settle this matter here." At the same time a policeman crossed the way, and joined them; and another man, who was in fact a policeman in plain clothes, emerged from a doorway, and stood at Robert Penfold's back.

The Detective, having thus surrounded him, threw off disguise. "My man," said he, "I ought to have done this job in your house. But I looked at the worthy old gentleman, and his grey hairs. I thought I'd spare him all I could. I have a warrant to arrest you for forgery!"

"Forgery! arrest me for forgery!" said Robert Penfold, with some amazement, but little emotion; for he hardly seemed to take it in, in all its horrible significance.

The next moment, however, he turned pale, and almost staggered under the blow.

"We had better go to Mr. Wardlaw," said he, "I entreat you to go to him with me."

"Can't be done," said the detective. "Wardlaw has nothing to do with it. The bill is stopped. You are arrested by the gent that cashed it. Here is the warrant; will you go quietly with us, or must I put the darbies on?"

Robert was violently agitated. "There is no need to arrest me," he cried; "I shall not run from my accuser. Hands off, I say. I'm a clergyman of the Church of England, and you shall not lay hands on me."

But one of the policemen did lay hands on him. Then the Reverend Robert Penfold shook him furiously off, and, with one active bound, sprang into the middle of the road.

The officers went at him incautiously, and the head-detective, as he rushed forward, received a heavy blow on the neck and jaw, that sounded along the street, and sent him rolling in the mud; this was followed by a quick succession of staggering facers, administered right and left, on the eyes and noses of the subordinates. These, however, though bruised and bleeding, succeeded at last in grappling their man, and all came to the ground together, and there struggled furiously; every window in the street was open by this time and at one the white hair and reverend face of Michael Penfold looked out on this desperate and unseemly struggle, with hands that beat the air in helpless agony, and inarticulate cries of terror.

The detective got up and sat upon Robert Penfold's chest; and at last the three forced the handcuffs upon him, and took him in a cab to the station-house.

Next day, before the magistrate, Wardlaw senior proved the note was a forgery, and Mr. Adams's partner swore to the prisoner as the person who had presented and indorsed the note. The officers attended, two with black eyes apiece, and one with his jaw bound up, and two sound teeth in his pocket, which had been driven from their sockets by the prisoner in his desperate attempt to escape. Their evidence hurt the prisoner, and the magistrate refused bail.

The Reverend Robert Penfold was committed to prison, to be tried at the Central Criminal Court on a charge of felony.

Wardlaw senior returned home and told Wardlaw junior, who said not a word. He soon received a letter from Robert Penfold, which agitated him greatly, and he promised to go to the prison and see him.

But he never went.

He was very miserable, a prey to an inward struggle. He dared not offend his father on the eve of being made partner. Yet his heart bled for Robert Penfold.

He did what might perhaps have been expected from that pale eye and receding chin—he temporized. He said to himself, "Before that horrible trial comes on, I shall be the house of Wardlaw, and able to draw a check for thousands. I'll buy off Adams at any price, and hush up the whole matter."

So he hoped, and hoped. But the accountant was slow, the public prosecutor unusually quick, and, to young Wardlaw's agony, the partnership deed was not ready when an imploring letter was put into his hands, urging him, by all that men

hold sacred, to attend at the court as the prisoner's witness.

This letter almost drove young Wardlaw mad. He went to Adams, and entreated him not to carry the matter into court. But Adams was inexorable. He had got his money, but would be revenged for the fright.

Baffled here, young Wardlaw went down to Oxford and shut himself up in his own room, a prey to fear and remorse. He sported his oak, and never went out. All his exercise was that of a wild beast in its den, walking restlessly up and down.

But all his caution did not prevent the prisoner's solicitor from getting to him. One morning, at seven o'clock, a clerk slipped in at the heels of his scout, and, coming to young Wardlaw's bedside, awoke him out of an uneasy slumber by serving him with a subpoena to appear as Robert Penfold's witness.

This last stroke finished him. His bodily health gave way under his mental distress. Gastric fever set in, and he was lying tossing and raving in delirium, while Robert Penfold was being tried at the Central Criminal Court.

The trial occupied six hours, and could easily be made rather interesting. But, for various reasons, with which it would not be good taste to trouble the reader, we decide to skim it.

The indictment contained two counts; one for forging the note of hand, the other for uttering it, knowing it to be forged.

On the first count, the Crown was weak, and had to encounter the evidence of Undercliff, the distinguished expert, who swore that the hand which wrote "Robert Penfold" was not, in his opinion, the hand that had written the body of the instrument. He gave many minute reasons in support of this: and nothing of any weight was advanced contra. The judge directed the jury to acquit the prisoner on that count.

But, on the charge of uttering, the evidence was clear, and on the question of knowledge, it was, perhaps, a disadvantage to the prisoner that he was tried in England, and could not be heard in person, as he could have been in a foreign court; above all, his resistance to the officers eked out the presumption that he knew the note had been forged by some person or other, who was probably his accomplice.

The absence of his witness, Wardlaw junior, was severely commented on by his counsel; indeed, he appealed to the judge to commit the said Wardlaw for contempt of court. But Wardlaw senior was recalled, and swore that he had left his son in a burning fever, not expected to live: and declared, with genuine emotion, that nothing but a high sense of public duty had brought him hither from his dying son's bedside. He also told the court that Arthur's inability to clear his friend had really been the first cause of his illness, from which he was not expected to recover.

The jury consulted together a long time; and, at last, brought in a verdict of "GUILTY;" but recommended him to mercy, on grounds which might fairly have been alleged in favor of his innocence; but, if guilty, rather aggravated his crime.

Then an officer of the court inquired, in a sort of chant or recitativo, whether the prisoner had anything to say why judgment should not be given in accordance with the verdict.

It is easy to divest words of their meaning by false intonation; and prisoners in general receive this bit of sing-song in dead silence. For why? the chant conveys no idea to their ears, and they would as soon think of *replying* to the notes of a cuckoo.

But the Reverend Robert Penfold was in a keen agony that sharpened all his senses; he caught the sense of the words in spite of the speaker, and clung wildly to the straw that monotonous machine held out. "My lord! my lord!" he cried, "I'll tell you the real reason why young Wardlaw is not here."

The judge put up his hand with a gesture that enforced silence: "Prisoner," said he, "I can not go back to facts; the jury have dealt with them. Judgment can be arrested only on grounds of law. On these you can be heard. But, if you have none to offer, you must be silent, and submit to your sentence." He then, without a pause, proceeded to point out the heinous character of the offense, but admitted there was one mitigating circumstance; and, in conclusion, he condemned the culprit to five years penal servitude.

At this the poor wretch uttered a cry of anguish that was fearful, and clutched the dock convulsively.

Now a prisoner rarely speaks to a judge without revolting him by bad law, or bad logic, or hot words. But this wild cry was innocent of all these, and went straight from the heart in the dock to the heart in the judgment-seat. And so his lordship's voice trembled for a moment, and then became firm again, but solemn and humane. "But," said he, "my experience tells me this is your first crime, and may possibly be your last. I shall therefore use my influence that you may not be associated with more hardened criminals, but may be sent out of this country to another, where you may begin life afresh, and, in the course of years, efface this dreadful stain. Give me hopes of you; begin your repentance where now you stand, by blaming yourself, and no other man. No man constrained you to utter a forged note, and to receive the money; it was found in your possession. For such an act there can be no defense in law, morality, or religion."

These words overpowered the culprit. He burst out crying with great violence.

But it did not last long. He became strangely composed all of a sudden; and said, "God forgive all concerned in this—but one—but one."

He then bowed respectfully, and like a gentleman, to the judge and the jury, and walked out of the dock with the air of a man who had parted with emotion, and would march to the gallows now without flinching.

The counsel for the Crown required that the forged document should be impounded.

"I was about to make the same demand," said the prisoner's counsel.

The judge snubbed them both, and said it was a matter of course.

Robert Penfold spent a year in separate confinement, and then, to cure him of its salutary effect (if any), was sent on board the hulk "Vengeance," and was herded with the greatest miscreants in creation. They did not reduce him to their level, but they injured his mind: and, before half his sentence had expired, he sailed for a penal colony, a man with a hot coal in his bo-

some, a creature imbittered, poisoned; hoping little, believing little, fearing little, and hating much.

He took with him the prayer-book his mother had given him when he was ordained deacon. But he seldom read beyond the fly-leaf; there the poor lady had written at large her mother's heart, and her pious soul aspiring heavenward for her darling son. This, when all seemed darkest, he would sometimes run to with moist eyes: for he was sure of his mother's love, but almost doubted the justice of his God.

CHAPTER III.

MR. WARDLAW went down to his son, and nursed him. He kept the newspapers from him, and, on his fever abating, had him conveyed by easy stages to the seaside, and then sent him abroad.

The young man obeyed in gloomy silence. He never asked after Robert Penfold, now; never mentioned his name. He seemed, somehow, thankful to be controlled mind and body.

But, before he had been abroad a month, he wrote for leave to return home and to throw himself into business. There was, for once, a nervous impatience in his letters, and his father, who pitied him deeply, and was more than ever inclined to reward and indulge him, yielded readily enough; and, on his arrival, signed the partnership deed, and Polonius-like, gave him much good counsel; then retired to his country seat.

At first he used to run up every three days, and examine the day-book and ledger, and advise his junior; but these visits soon became fewer, and at last he did little more than correspond occasionally.

Arthur Wardlaw held the reins, and easily paid his Oxford debts out of the assets of the firm. Not being happy in his mind, he threw himself into commerce with feverish zeal, and very soon extended the operations of the house.

One of his first acts of authority was to send for Michael Penfold into his room. Now poor old Michael, ever since his son's misfortune, as he called it, had crept to his desk like a culprit, expecting every day to be discharged. When he received this summons he gave a sigh and went slowly to the young merchant.

Arthur Wardlaw looked up at his entrance, then looked down again, and said coldly, "Mr. Penfold, you have been a faithful servant to us many years; I raise your salary £50 a year, and you will keep the ledger."

The old man was dumbfounded at first, and then began to give vent to his surprise and gratitude; but Wardlaw cut him short, almost fiercely. "There, there, there," said he, without raising his eyes, "let me hear no more about it, and, above all, never speak to me of that cursed business. It was no fault of yours, nor mine neither. There—go—I want no thanks. Do you hear? leave me, Mr. Penfold, if you please."

The old man bowed low and retired, wondering much at his employer's goodness, and a little at his irritability.

Wardlaw junior's whole soul was given to business night and day, and he soon became known for a very ambitious and rising merchant.

But, by-and-by, ambition had to encounter a rival in his heart. He fell in love; deeply in love; and with a worthy object.

The young lady was the daughter of a distinguished officer, whose merits were universally recognized, but not rewarded in proportion. Wardlaw's suit was favorably received by the father, and the daughter gradually yielded to an attachment, the warmth, sincerity, and singleness of which were manifest: and the pair would have been married, but for the circumstance that her father (partly through Wardlaw's influence, by-the-by) had obtained a lucrative post abroad which it suited his means to accept, at all events for a time. He was a widower, and his daughter could not let him go alone.

This temporary separation, if it postponed a marriage, led naturally to a solemn engagement; and Arthur Wardlaw enjoyed the happiness of writing and receiving affectionate letters by every foreign post. Love, worthily bestowed, shed its balm upon his heart, and, under its soft but powerful charm, he grew tranquil and complacent, and his character and temper seemed to improve. Such virtue is there in a pure attachment.

Meanwhile the extent of his operations alarmed old Penfold; but he soon reasoned that worthy down with overpowering conclusions and superior smiles.

He had been three years the ruling spirit of Wardlaw and Son, when some curious events took place in another hemisphere; and in these events, which we are now to relate, Arthur Wardlaw was more nearly interested than may appear at first sight.

Robert Penfold, in due course, applied to Lieutenant-general Rolleston for a ticket of leave. That functionary thought the application premature, the crime being so grave. He complained that the system had become too lax, and for his part he seldom gave a ticket of leave until some suitable occupation was provided for the applicant. "Will any body take you as a clerk? If so, I'll see about it."

Robert Penfold could find nobody to take him into a post of confidence all at once, and wrote the General an eloquent letter, begging hard to be allowed to labor with his hands.

Fortunately, General Rolleston's gardener had just turned him off; so he offered the post to his eloquent correspondent, remarking that he did not much mind employing a ticket-of-leave man himself, though he was resolved to protect his neighbors from their relapses.

The convict then came to General Rolleston, and begged leave to enter on his duties under the name of James Seaton. At that General Rolleston hem'd and haw'd, and took a note. But his final decision was as follows: "If you really mean to change your character, why, the name you have disgraced might hang round your neck. Well, I'll give you every chance. But," said the old warrior, suddenly compressing his resolute lips just a little, "if you go a yard off the straight path *now*, look for no mercy, *Jemmy Seaton*."

So the convict was re-christened at the tail of a threat, and let loose among the warrior's tulips.

His appearance was changed as effectually as

his name. Even before he was Seatoned he had grown a silky mustache and beard of singular length and beauty; and, what with these, and his working-man's clothes, and his cheeks and neck tanned by the sun, our readers would never have recognized in this hale, bearded laborer the pale prisoner that had trembled, raged, wept, and submitted in the dock of the Central Criminal Court.

Our Universities cure men of doing things by halves, be the things mental or muscular; so Seaton gardened much more zealously than his plebeian predecessor: up at five, and did not leave till eight.

But he was unpopular in the kitchen,—because he was always out of it: taciturn and bitter, he shunned his fellow-servants.

Yet working among the flowers did him good; these, his petty companions and nurslings, had no vices.

One day, as he was rolling the grass upon the lawn, he heard a soft rustle at some distance, and, looking round, saw a young lady on the gravel-path, whose calm but bright face, coming so suddenly, literally dazzled him. She had a clear cheek blooming with exercise, rich brown hair, smooth, glossy, and abundant, and a very light hazel eye, of singular beauty and serenity. She glided along, tranquil as a goddess, smote him with beauty and perfume, and left him staring after her receding figure, which was, in its way, as captivating as her face.

She was walking up and down for exercise, briskly, but without effort. Once she passed within a few yards of him, and he touched his hat to her. She inclined her head gently, but her eyes did not rest an instant on her gardener; and so she passed and re-passed, unconsciously sawing this solitary heart with soft but penetrating thrills.

At last she went in-doors to luncheon, and the lawn seemed to miss the light music of her rustling dress, and the sunshine of her presence, and there was a painful void; but that passed, and a certain sense of happiness stole over James Seaton—an unreasonable joy, that often runs before folly and trouble.

The young lady was Helen Rolleston, just returned home from a visit. She walked in the garden every day, and Seaton watched her, and peeped at her, unseen, behind trees and bushes. He fed his eyes and his heart upon her, and, by degrees, she became the sun of his solitary existence. It was madness; but its first effect was not unwholesome. The daily study of this creature, who, though by no means the angel he took her for, was at all events a pure and virtuous woman, soothed his sore heart, and counteracted the demoralizing influences of his late companions. Every day he drank deeper of an insane, but purifying and elevating passion.

He avoided the kitchen still more; and that, by-the-by, was unlucky; for there he could have learned something about Miss Helen Rolleston that would have warned him to keep at the other end of the garden whenever that charming face and form glided to and fro amongst the minor flowers.

A beautiful face fires our imagination, and we see higher virtue and intelligence in it than we can detect in its owner's head or heart when we descend to calm inspection. James Seaton gazed

on Miss Rolleston day after day, at so respectful a distance, that she became his goddess. If a day passed without his seeing her, he was dejected. When she was behind her time, he was restless, anxious, and his work distasteful; and then, when she came out at last, he thrilled all over, and the lawn, ay, the world itself, seemed to fill with sunshine. His adoration, timid by its own nature, was doubly so by reason of his fallen and hopeless condition. He cut nose-gays for her; but gave them to her maid Wilson for her. He had not the courage to offer them to herself.

One evening, as he went home, a man addressed him familiarly, but in a low voice. Seaton looked at him attentively, and recognized him at last. It was a convict called Butt, who had come over in the ship with him. The man offered him a glass of ale; Seaton declined it. Butt, a very clever rogue, seemed hurt; so then Seaton assented reluctantly. Butt took him to a public house in a narrow street, and into a private room. Seaton started as soon as he entered, for there sat two repulsive ruffians, and, by a look that passed rapidly between them and Butt, he saw plainly that they were waiting for him. He felt nervous; the place was so uncouth and dark, the faces so villainous.

However, they invited him to sit down, roughly, but with an air of good fellowship; and very soon opened their business over their ale. We are all bound to assist our fellow-creatures, when it can be done without trouble; and what they asked of him was a simple act of courtesy, such as in their opinion no man worthy of the name could deny to his fellow. It was to give General Rolleston's watch-dog a piece of prepared meat upon a certain evening; and, in return for this trifling civility, they were generous enough to offer him a full share of any light valuables they might find in the General's house.

Seaton trembled, and put his face in his hands a moment. "I can not do it," said he.

"Why not?"

"He has been too good to me."

A coarse laugh of derision greeted this argument; it seemed so irrelevant to these pure egoists. Seaton, however, persisted, and on that one of the men got up and stood before the door, and drew his knife gently.

Seaton glanced his eyes round in search of a weapon, and turned pale.

"Do you mean to split on us, mate?" said one of the ruffians in front of him.

"No, I don't. But I won't rob my benefactor: you shall kill me first." And with that he darted to the fireplace, and in a moment the poker was high in air, and the way he squared his shoulders and stood ready to hit to the on, or cut to the off, was a caution.

"Come, drop that," said Butt, grimly; "and put up *your* knife, Bob. Can't a pal be out of a job, and yet not split on them that is in it?"

"Why should I split?" said Robert Penfold. "Has the law been a friend to me? But I won't rob my benefactor—and his daughter."

"That is square enough," said Butt. "Why, pals, there are other cribs to be cracked besides that old bloke's. Finish the ale, mate, and part friends."

"If you will promise me to 'crack some other crib,' and let that one alone."

A sullen assent was given, and Seaton drank their healths, and walked away. Butt followed him soon after, and affected to side with him, and intimated that he himself was capable of not robbing a man's house who had been good to him, or to a pal of his. Indeed, this plausible person said so much, and his sullen comrades had said so little, that Seaton, rendered keen and anxious by love, invested his savings in a Colt's revolver and ammunition.

He did not stop there; after the hint about the watch-dog, he would not trust that faithful but too carnivorous animal; he brought his blankets into the little tool-house, and lay there every night in a sort of dog's sleep. This tool-house was erected in a little back garden, separated from the lawn only by some young trees in single file. Now Miss Rolleston's window looked out upon the lawn, so that Seaton's watch-tower was not many yards from it; then, as the tool-house was only lighted from above, he bored a hole in the wooden structure, and through this he watched, and slept, and watched. He used to sit studying theology by a farthing rushlight till the lady's bedtime, and then he watched for her shadow. If it appeared for a few moments on the blind, he gave a sigh of content, and went to sleep, but awaked every now and then to see that all was well.

After a few nights, his alarms naturally ceased, but his love increased, fed now from this new source, the sweet sense of being the secret protector of her he adored.

Meantime Miss Rolleston's lady's maid, Wilson, fell in love with him after her fashion; she had taken a fancy to his face at once, and he had encouraged her a little, unintentionally; for he brought the nose-gays to her, and listened complacently to her gossip, for the sake of the few words she let fall now and then about her young mistress. As he never exchanged two sentences at a time with any other servant, this flattered Sarah Wilson, and she soon began to meet and accost him oftener, and in cherrier-colored ribbons, than he could stand. So then he showed impatience, and then she, reading him by herself, suspected some vulgar rival.

Suspicion soon bred jealousy, jealousy vigilance, and vigilance detection.

Her first discovery was that, so long as she talked of Miss Helen Rolleston, she was always welcome; her second was, that Seaton slept in the tool-house.

She was not romantic enough to connect her two discoveries together. They lay apart in her mind, until circumstances we are about to relate supplied a connecting link.

One Thursday evening James Seaton's goddess sat alone with her papa, and, — being a young lady of fair abilities, who had gone through her course of music and other studies, taught brainlessly, and who was now going through a course of monotonous pleasures, and had not accumulated any great store of mental resources, — she was listless and languid, and would have yawned forty times in her papa's face, only she was too well bred. She always turned her head away when it came, and either suppressed it, or else hid it with a lovely white hand. At last, as she was a good girl, she blushed at her behavior, and roused herself up, and said she, "Papa, shall I play you the new quadrilles!"

Papa gave a start and a shake, and said, with well-feigned vehemence, "Ay, do, my dear," and so composed himself—to listen; and Helen sat down and played the quadrilles.

The composer had taken immortal melodies, some gay, some sad, and had robbed them of their distinctive character, and hashed them till they were all one monotonous rattle. But General Rolleston was little the worse for all this. As Apollo saved Horace from hearing a poetaster's rhymes, so did Somnus, another beneficent little deity, rescue our warrior from his daughter's music.

She was neither angry nor surprised. A delicious smile illumined her face directly; she crept to him on tiptoe, and bestowed a kiss, light as a zephyr, on his gray head. And, in truth, the bending attitude of this supple figure, clad in snowy muslin, the virginal face and light hazel eye beaming love and reverence, and the airy kiss, had something angelic.

She took her candle, and glided up to her bedroom. And, the moment she got there, and could gratify her somnolence without offense, need we say she became wide-awake? She sat down, and wrote long letters to three other young ladies, gushing affection, asking questions of the kind nobody replies to, painting, with a young lady's colors, the male being to whom she was shortly to be married, wishing her dear friends a like demigod, if perchance earth contained two; and so to the last new bonnet and preacher.

She sat over her paper till one o'clock, and Seaton watched and adored her shadow.

When she had done writing, she opened her window and looked out upon the night. She lifted those wonderful hazel eyes towards the stars, and her watcher might well be pardoned if he saw in her a celestial being looking up from an earthly resting-place towards her native sky.

At two o'clock she was in bed, but not asleep. She lay calmly gazing at the Southern Cross, and other lovely stars shining with vivid, but chaste, fire in the purple vault of heaven.

While thus employed she heard a slight sound outside that made her turn her eyes towards a young tree near her window. Its top branches were waving a good deal, though there was not a breath stirring. This struck her as curious, very curious.

Whilst she wondered, suddenly an arm and a hand came in sight, and after them the whole figure of a man, going up the tree.

Helen sat up now, glaring with terror, and was so paralyzed she did not utter a sound. About a foot below her window was a lead flat that roofed the bay-window below. It covered an area of several feet, and the man sprang on to it with perfect ease from the tree. Helen shrieked with terror. At that very instant there was a flash, a pistol-shot, and the man's arms went whirling, and he staggered and fell over the edge of the flat, and struck the grass below with a heavy thud. Shots and blows followed, and all the sounds of a bloody struggle rung in Helen's ears as she flung herself screaming from the bed and darted to the door. She ran and clung quivering to her sleepy maid, Wilson. The house was alarmed, lights flashed, footsteps pattered, there was universal commotion.

General Rolleston soon learned his daughter's

story from Wilson, and aroused his male servants, one of whom was an old soldier. They searched the house first; but no entrance had been effected; so they went out on the lawn with blunderbuss and pistol.

They found a man lying on his back at the foot of the bay-window.

They pounced on him, and, to their amazement, it was the gardener, James Seaton. Insensible.

General Rolleston was quite taken aback for a moment. Then he was sorry. But, after a little reflection, he said very sternly, "Carry the blackguard in-doors, and run for an officer."

Seaton was taken into the hall, and laid flat on the floor.

All the servants gathered about him, brimful of curiosity, and the female ones began to speak all together; but General Rolleston told them sharply to hold their tongues, and to retire behind the man. "Somebody sprinkle him with cold water," said he; "and be quiet, all of you, and keep out of sight, while I examine him." He stood before the insensible figure with his arms folded, amidst a dead silence, broken only by the stifled sobs of Sarah Wilson, and of a sociable housemaid who cried, with her for company.

And now Seaton began to writhe and show signs of returning sense.

Next he moaned piteously, and sighed. But General Rolleston could not pity him; he waited grimly for returning consciousness, to subject him to merciless interrogatory.

He waited just one second too long. He had to answer a question instead of putting one.

The judgment is the last faculty a man recovers when emerging from insensibility; and Seaton, seeing the General standing before him, stretched out his hands, and said, in a faint, but earnest voice, before eleven witnesses, "Is she safe? Oh, is she safe?"

CHAPTER IV.

SARAH WILSON left off crying, and looked down on the ground with a very red face. General Rolleston was amazed. "Is she safe? Is who safe?" said he. "He means my mistress," replied Wilson, rather brusquely; and flounced out of the hall.

"She is safe, no thanks to you," said General Rolleston. "What were you doing under her window at this time of night?" And the harsh tone in which this question was put showed Seaton he was suspected. This wounded him, and he replied doggedly, "Lucky for you all I was there."

"That is no answer to my question," said the General, sternly.

"It is all the answer I shall give you."

"Then I shall hand you over to the officer, without another word."

"Do, sir, do," said Seaton, bitterly; but he added more gently, "you will be sorry for it when you come to your senses."

At this moment Wilson entered with a message. "If you please, sir, Miss Rolleston says the robber had no beard. Miss have never noticed Seaton's face, but the beard she have; and

oh, if you please, sir, she begged me to ask him,—Was it you that fired the pistol and shot the robber?"

The delivery of this ungrammatical message but rational query was like a ray of light streaming into a dark place: it changed the whole aspect of things. As for Seaton, he received it as if Heaven was speaking to him through Wilson. His sullen air relaxed, the water stood in his eyes, he smiled affectionately, and said in a low, tender voice, "Tell her I heard some bad characters talking about this house,—that was a month ago,—so, ever since then, I have slept in the tool-house to watch. Yes, I shot the robber with my revolver, and I marked one or two more; but they were three to one; I think I must have got a blow on the head; for I felt nothing—"

Here he was interrupted by a violent scream from Wilson. She pointed downward, with her eyes glaring; and a little blood was seen to be trickling slowly over Seaton's stocking and shoe.

"Wounded," said the General's servant, Tom, in the business-like accent of one who had seen a thousand wounds.

"Oh, never mind that," said Seaton. "It can't be very deep, for I don't feel it;" then, fixing his eyes on General Rolleston, he said, in a voice that broke down suddenly, "There stands the only man who has wounded me to-night, to hurt me."

The way General Rolleston received this point-blank reproach surprised some persons present, who had observed only the imperious and iron side of his character. He hung his head in silence a moment; then, being discontented with himself, he went into a passion with his servants for standing idle. "Run away, you women," said he, roughly. "Now, Tom, if you are good for any thing, strip the man and stanch his wound. Andrew, a bottle of port, quick!"

Then, leaving him for a while in friendly hands, he went to his daughter, and asked her if she saw any objection to a bed being made up in the house for the wounded convict.

"Oh, papa," said she, "why, of course not. I am all gratitude. What is he like, Wilson? for it is a most provoking thing, I never noticed his face, only his beautiful beard glittering in the sunshine ever so far off. Poor young man! Oh yes, papa! send him to bed directly, and we will all nurse him. I never did any good in the world yet, and so why not begin at once?"

General Rolleston laughed at this squirt of enthusiasm from his staid daughter, and went off to give the requisite orders.

But Wilson followed him immediately and stopped him in the passage.

"If you please, sir, I think you had better not. I have something to tell you." She then communicated to him by degrees her suspicion that James Seaton was in love with his daughter. He treated this with due ridicule at first; but she gave him one reason after another till she staggered him, and he went down-stairs in a most mixed and puzzled frame of mind, inclined to laugh, inclined to be angry, inclined to be sorry.

The officer had just arrived, and was looking over some photographs to see if James Seaton was "one of his birds." Such, alas! was his expression.

At sight of this Rolleston colored up; but extricated himself from the double difficulty with

some skill. "Hexham," said he, "this poor fellow has behaved like a man, and got himself wounded in my service. You are to take him to the infirmary; but, mind, they must treat him like my own son, and nothing he asks for be denied him."

Seaton walked with feeble steps, and leaning on two men, to the infirmary; and General Rolleston ordered a cup of coffee, lighted a cigar, and sat cogitating over this strange business, and asking himself how he could get rid of this young madman, and yet befriend him. As for Sarah Wilson, she went to bed discontented, and wondering at her own bad judgment. She saw, too late, that, if she had held her tongue, Seaton would have been her patient and her prisoner; and as for Miss Rolleston, when it came to the point, why, she would never have nursed him except by proxy, and the proxy would have been Sarah Wilson.

However, the blunder blind passion had led her into was partially repaired by Miss Rolleston herself. When she heard, next day, where Seaton was gone, she lifted up her hands in amazement. "What *could* papa be thinking of to send our benefactor to a hospital?" And after meditating awhile, she directed Wilson to cut a nosegay and carry it to Seaton. "He is a gardener," said she, innocently. "Of course he will miss his flowers sadly in that miserable place."

And she gave the same order every day, with a constancy that, you must know, formed part of this young lady's character. Soup, wine, and jellies were sent from the kitchen every other day with equal pertinacity.

Wilson concealed the true donor of all those things, and took the credit to herself. By this means she obtained the patient's gratitude, and he showed it so frankly, she hoped to steal his love as well.

But no! his fancy and his heart remained true to the cold beauty he had served so well, and she had forgotten him, apparently.

This irritated Wilson at last, and she set to work to cure him with wholesome, but bitter medicine. She sat down beside him one day, and said, cheerfully. "We are all '*on the key-feet*' just now. Miss Rolleston's beau is come on a visit."

The patient opened his eyes with astonishment.

"Miss Rolleston's beau?"

"Ay, her intended. What, didn't you know she was engaged to be married?"

"She engaged to be married?" gasped Seaton.

Wilson watched him with a remorseless eye.

"Why, James," said she, after a while, "did you think the likes of her would go through the world without a mate?"

Seaton made no reply but a moan, and lay back like one dead, utterly crushed by this cruel blow.

A buxom middle-aged nurse now came up, and said, with a touch of severity, "Come, my good girl, no doubt you mean well, but you are doing ill. You had better leave him to us for the present."

On this hint Wilson bounced out, and left the patient to his misery.

At her next visit she laid a nosegay on his

bed, and gossiped away, talking of every thing in the world except Miss Rolleston.

At last she came to a pause, and Seaton laid his hand on her arm directly, and, looking pitifully in her face, spoke his first word.

"Does she love him?"

"What, still harping on *her*?" said Wilson. "Well, she doesn't hate him, I suppose, or she would not marry him."

"For pity's sake don't trifle with me! Does she love him?"

"La, James, how can I tell? She mayn't love him quite as much as I could love a man that took my fancy" (here she cast a languishing glance on Seaton); "but I see no difference between her and other young ladies. Miss is very fond of her papa, for one thing; and he favors the match. Ay, and she likes her partner well enough: she is brighter like, now he is in the house, and she reads all her friends' letters to him ever so lovingly; and I do notice she leans on him, out walking, a trifle more than there is any need for."

At this picture James Seaton writhed in his bed like some agonized creature under vivisection; but the woman spurred by jealousy, and also by egotistical passion, had no mercy left for him.

"And why not?" continued she; "he is young, and handsome, and rich, and he dotes on her. If you are really her friend, you ought to be glad she is so well suited."

At this admonition the tears stood in Seaton's eyes, and after a while he got strength to say, "I know I ought, I know it, if he is only worthy of her, as worthy as any man could be."

"That he is, James. Why, I'll be bound you have heard of him. It is young Mr. Wardlaw."

Seaton started up in bed. "Who? Wardlaw? what Wardlaw?"

"What Wardlaw? why, the great London merchant, his son. Leastways he manages the whole concern now, I hear; the old gentleman, he is retired, by all accounts."

"CURSE HIM! CURSE HIM! CURSE HIM!" yelled James Seaton, with his eyes glaring fearfully, and both hands beating the air.

Sarah Wilson recoiled with alarm.

"That angel marry *him*!" shrieked Seaton.

"Never, while I live: I'll throttle him with these hands first."

What more his ungovernable fury would have uttered was interrupted by a rush of nurses and attendants, and Wilson was bundled out of the place with little ceremony.

He contrived, however, to hurl a word after her, accompanied with a look of concentrated rage and resolution.

"NEVER, I TELL YOU,—WHILE I LIVE."

At her next visit to the hospital, Wilson was refused admission by order of the head surgeon. She left her flowers daily all the same.

After a few days she thought the matter might have cooled, and, having a piece of news to communicate to Seaton, with respect to Arthur Wardlaw, she asked to see that patient.

"Left the hospital this morning," was the reply.

"What, cured?"

"Why not? We have cured worse cases than his."

"Where has he gone to? Pray tell me."

"Oh, certainly." And inquiry was made. But the reply was, "Left no address."

Sarah Wilson, like many other women of high and low degree, had swift misgivings of mischief to come. She was taken with a fit of trembling, and had to sit down in the hall.

And, to tell the truth, she had cause to tremble; for that tongue of hers had launched two wild beasts,—Jealousy and Revenge.

When she got better she went home, and, coward-like, said not a word to living soul.

That day Arthur Wardlaw dined with General Rolleston and Helen. They were to be alone for a certain reason; and he came half an hour before dinner. Helen thought he would, and was ready for him on the lawn.

They walked arm-in-arm, talking of the happiness before them, and regretting a temporary separation that was to intervene. He was her father's choice, and she loved her father devotedly; he was her male property; and young ladies like that sort of property, especially when they see nothing to dislike in it. He loved her passionately, and that was her due, and pleased her and drew a gentle affection, if not a passion from her in return. Yes, that lovely forehead did come very near young Wardlaw's shoulder more than once or twice, as they strolled slowly up and down on the soft mossy turf.

And, on the other side of the hedge that bounded the lawn, a man lay crouched in the ditch, and saw it all with gleaming eyes.

Just before the affianced ones went in, Helen said, "I have a little favor to ask you, dear. The poor man, Seaton, who fought the robbers, and was wounded,—papa says he is a man of education, and wanted to be a clerk or something. Could you find him a place?"

"I think I can," said Wardlaw; "indeed I am sure. A line to White and Co. will do it; they want a shipping-clerk."

"Oh, how good you are!" said Helen; and lifted her face all beaming with thanks.

The opportunity was tempting; the lover fond: two faces met for a single moment, and one of the two burned for five minutes after.

The basilisk eyes saw the soft collision; but the owner of those eyes did not hear the words that earned him that torture. He lay still and bided his time.

General Rolleston's house stood clear of the town at the end of a short, but narrow and tortuous lane. This situation had tempted the burglars whom Seaton baffled; and now it tempted Seaton.

Wardlaw must pass that way on leaving General Rolleston's house.

At a bend of the lane two twin elms stood out a foot or two from the hedge. Seaton got behind these at about ten o'clock, and watched for him with a patience and immobility that boded ill.

His preparations for this encounter were singular. He had a close-shutting inkstand and a pen, and one sheet of paper, at the top of which he had written "Sydney," and the day of the month and year, leaving the rest blank. And he had the revolver with which he had shot the robber at Helen Rolleston's window; and a barrel of that arm was loaded with swan-shot.

CHAPTER V.

THE moon went down; the stars shone out clearer.

Eleven o'clock boomed from a church clock in the town.

Wardlaw did not come, and Seaton did not move from his ambush.

Twelve o'clock boomed, and Wardlaw never came, and Seaton never moved.

Soon after midnight, General Rolleston's hall door opened, and a figure appeared in a flood of light. Seaton's eyes gleamed at the light, for it was young Wardlaw, with a footman at his back holding a lighted lamp.

Wardlaw, however, seemed in no hurry to leave the house, and the reason soon appeared; he was joined by Helen Rolleston, and she was equipped for walking. The watcher saw her serene face shine in the light. The General himself came next: and, as they left the door, out came Tom with a blunderbuss, and brought up the rear. Seaton drew behind the trees, and postponed, but did not resign, his purpose.

Steps and murmurings came, and passed him, and receded.

The only words he caught distinctly came from Wardlaw as he passed. "It is nearly high tide. I fear we must make haste."

Seaton followed the whole party at a short distance, feeling sure they would eventually separate and give him his opportunity with Wardlaw.

They went down to the harbor and took a boat: Seaton came nearer, and learned they were going on board the great steamer bound for England, that loomed so black, with monstrous eyes of fire.

They put off, and Seaton stood baffled.

Presently the black monster, with enormous eyes of fire, spouted her steam like a Leviathan, and then was still; next the smoke puffed, the heavy paddles revolved, and she rushed out of the harbor; and Seaton sat down upon the ground, and all seemed ended. Helen gone to England! Wardlaw gone with her! Love and revenge had alike eluded him. He looked up at the sky, and played with the pebbles at his feet, stupidly, stupidly. He wondered why he was born; why he consented to live a single minute after this. His angel and his demon gone home together! And he left here!

He wrote a few lines on the paper he had intended for Wardlaw, sprinkled them with sand, and put them in his bosom, then stretched himself out with a weary moan, like a dying dog, to wait the flow of the tide, and, with it, Death. Whether or not his resolution or his madness could have carried him so far can not be known, for even as the water rippled in, and, trickling under his back, chilled him to the bone, a silvery sound struck his ear. He started to his feet, and life and its joys rushed back upon him. It was the voice of the woman he loved so madly.

Helen Rolleston was on the water, coming ashore again in the little boat.

He crawled, like a lizard, among the boats ashore to catch a sight of her: he did see her, was near her, unseen himself. She landed with her father. So Wardlaw was gone to England without her. Seaton trembled with joy. Presently his goddess began to lament in the prettiest

way. "Papa! papa!" she sighed, "why must friends part in this sad world? Poor Arthur is gone from me; and, by-and-by, I shall go from you, my own papa." And at that prospect she wept gently.

"Why, you foolish child!" said the old General, tenderly, "what matters a little parting, when we are all to meet again in dear old England? Well then, there, have a cry; it will do you good. He patted her head tenderly, as she clung to his warlike breast; and she took him at his word; the tears ran swiftly and glistened in the very starlight.

But oh, how Seaton's heart yearned at all this!

What! mustn't *he* say a word to comfort her; he who, at that moment, would have thought no more of dying to serve her, or to please her, than he would of throwing one of those pebbles into that slimy water?

Well, her pure tears somehow cooled his hot brain, and washed his soul, and left him wondering at himself and his misdeeds this night. His guardian angel seemed to go by and wave her dewy wings, and fan his hot passions as she passed.

He kneeled down and thanked God he had not met Arthur Wardlaw in that dark lane.

Then he went home to his humble lodgings and there buried himself; and from that day seldom went out, except to seek employment. He soon obtained it as a copyist.

Meantime the police were on his track, employed by a person with a gentle disposition, but a tenacity of purpose truly remarkable.

Great was Seaton's uneasiness when one day he saw Hexham at the foot of his stair; greater still, when the officer's quick eye caught sight of him, and his light foot ascended the stairs directly. He felt sure Hexham had heard of his lurking about General Rolleston's premises. However, he prepared to defend himself to the uttermost.

Hexham came into his room without ceremony, and looking mighty grim. "Well, my lad, so we have got you, after all."

"What is my crime now?" asked Seaton, sullenly.

"James," said the officer, very solemnly, "it is an unheard-of-crime this time. You have been—running—away—from a pretty girl. Now that is a mistake at all times; but, when she is as beautiful as an angel, and rich enough to slip a fiver into Dick Hexham's hands, and lay him on your track, what is the use? Letter for *you*, my man."

Seaton took the letter with a puzzled air. It was written in a clear but feminine hand, and slightly scented.

The writer in a few polished lines excused herself for taking extraordinary means to find Mr. Seaton; but hoped he would consider that he had laid her under a deep obligation, and that gratitude *will* sometimes be importunate. She had the pleasure to inform him that the office of shipping-clerk at Messrs. White and Co.'s was at his service, and she hoped he would take it without an hour's further delay, for that she was assured that many persons had risen to wealth and consideration in the colony from such situations.

Then, as this wary but courteous young lady

had no wish to enter into a correspondence with her ex-gardener, she added :

“Mr. Seaton need not trouble himself to reply to this note. A simple ‘yes’ to Mr. Hexham will be enough, and will give sincere pleasure to Mr. Seaton’s

“Obedient servant and well-wisher,
“HELEN ANNE ROLLESTON.”

Seaton bowed his head over this letter in silent but deep emotion.

Hexham respected that emotion, and watched him with a sort of vague sympathy.

Seaton lifted his head, and the tears stood thick in his eyes. Said he, in a voice of exquisite softness, scarce above a whisper, “Tell her, ‘yes’ and ‘God bless her.’ Good-bye. I want to go on my knees, and pray God to bless her, as she deserves. Good-bye.”

Hexham took the hint, and retired softly.

CHAPTER VI.

WHITE AND Co. stumbled on a treasure in James Seaton. Your colonial clerk is not so narrow and apathetic as your London clerk, whose two objects seem to be, to learn one department only, and not to do too much in that ; but Seaton, a gentleman and a scholar, eclipsed even colonial clerks in this, that he omitted no opportunity of learning the whole business of White and Co., and was also animated by a feverish zeal that now and then provoked laughter from clerks, but was agreeable, as well as surprising, to White and Co. Of that zeal, his incurable passion was partly the cause. Fortunes had been made with great rapidity in Sydney ; and Seaton now conceived a wild hope of acquiring one, by some lucky hit, before Wardlaw could return to Helen Rolleston. And yet his common sense said, if I was as rich as Cæsar, how could she ever mate with me, a stained man. And yet his burning heart said, don’t listen to reason ; listen only to me. Try.

And so he worked double tides ; and, in virtue of his University education, had no snobbish notions about never putting his hand to manual labor : he would lay down his pen at any moment, and bear a hand to lift a chest or roll a cask. Old White saw him thus multiply himself, and was so pleased that he raised his salary one-third.

He never saw Helen Rolleston, except on Sunday. On that day he went to her church, and sat half behind a pillar, and feasted his eyes and his heart upon her. He lived sparingly, saved money, bought a strip of land by payment of £10 deposit, and sold it in forty hours for £100 profit, and watched keenly for similar opportunities on a larger scale ; and all for her. Struggling with a mountain : hoping against reason, and the world.

White and Co. were employed to ship a valuable cargo on board two vessels chartered by Wardlaw and Son ; the Shannon and Proserpine.

Both these ships lay in Sydney harbor, and had taken in the bulk of their cargoes ; but the

supplement was the cream ; for Wardlaw, in person, had warehoused eighteen cases of gold-dust and ingots, and fifty of lead and smelted copper.

They were all examined, and branded by Mr. White, who had duplicate keys of the gold cases. But the contents, as a matter of habit and prudence, were not described outside, but were marked Proserpine and Shannon, respectively ; the mate of the Proserpine, who was in Wardlaw’s confidence, had written instructions to look carefully to the stowage of all these cases, and was in and out of the store one afternoon just before closing, and measured the cubic contents of the cases, with a view to stowage in the respective vessels. The last time he came he seemed rather the worse for liquor ; and Seaton, who accompanied him, having stepped out for a minute for something or other, was rather surprised on his return to find the door closed, and it struck him Mr. Wylie (that was the mate’s name) might be inside ; the more so as the door closed very easily with a spring bolt, but it could only be opened by a key of peculiar construction. Seaton took out his key, opened the door, and called to the mate : but received no reply. However, he took the precaution to go round the store, and see whether Wylie, rendered somnolent by liquor, might not be lying oblivious among the cases ; Wylie, however, was not to be seen, and Seaton finding himself alone did an unwise thing ; he came and contemplated Wardlaw’s cases of metal and specie. (Men will go too near the thing that causes their pain.) He eyed them with grief and with desire, and could not restrain a sigh at these material proofs of his rival’s wealth : the wealth that probably had smoothed his way to General Rolleston’s home, and to his daughter’s heart ; for wealth can pave the way to hearts, ay, even to hearts that can not be downright bought. This reverie, no doubt, lasted longer than he thought, for presently he heard the loud rattle of shutters going up below : it was closing time ; he hastily closed and locked the iron shutters, and then went out and shut the door.

He had been gone about two hours, and that part of the street, so noisy in business hours, was hushed in silence, all but an occasional footstep on the flags outside, when something mysterious occurred in the warehouse, now as dark as pitch.

At an angle of the wall stood two large cases in a vertical position, with smaller cases lying at their feet : these two cases were about eight feet high, more or less. Well, behind these cases suddenly flashed a feeble light, and the next moment two brown and sinewy hands appeared on the edge of one of the cases,—the edge next the wall ; the case vibrated and rocked a little, and the next moment there mounted on the top of it not a cat, nor a monkey, as might have been expected, but an animal that in truth resembles both these quadrupeds, viz., a sailor ; and need we say that sailor was the mate of the Proserpine ? He descended lightly from the top of the case behind which he had been jammed for hours, and lighted a dark lantern ; and went softly groping about the store with it.

This was a mysterious act, and would perhaps have puzzled the proprietors of the store even more than it would a stranger : for a stranger would have said at once this is burglary, or else

arson; but those acquainted with the place would have known that neither of those crimes was very practicable. This enterprising sailor could not burn down this particular store without roasting himself the first thing; and indeed he could not burn it down at all; for the roof was flat, and was in fact one gigantic iron tank, like the roof of Mr. Goding's brewery in London: and, by a neat contrivance of American origin, the whole tank could be turned in one moment to a shower-bath, and drown a conflagration in thirty seconds or thereabouts. Nor could he rifle the place; the goods were greatly protected by their weight, and it was impossible to get out of the store without raising an alarm, and being searched.

But, not to fall into the error of writers who underrate their readers' curiosity and intelligence, and so deluge them with comments and explanations, we will now simply relate what Wylie did, leaving you to glean his motives as this tale advances. His jacket had large pockets, and he took out of them a bunch of eighteen bright steel keys, numbered, a set of new screw-drivers, a flask of rum, and two ship biscuits.

He unlocked the eighteen cases marked Proserpine, etc, and, peering in with his lantern, saw the gold-dust and small ingots packed in parcels, and surrounded by Australian wool of the highest possible quality. It was a luscious sight.

He then proceeded to a heavier task; he unscrewed, one after another, eighteen of the cases marked Shannon, and the eighteen so selected, perhaps by private marks, proved to be packed close, and on a different system from the gold, viz., in pigs, or square blocks, three, or, in some, cases, four to each chest. Now, these two ways of packing the specie, and the baser metal, respectively, had the effect of producing a certain uniformity of weight in the thirty-six cases Wylie was inspecting; otherwise the gold cases would have been twice the weight of those that contained the baser metal: for lead is proverbially heavy, but under scientific tests is to gold as five to twelve, or thereabouts.

In his secret and mysterious labor Wylie was often interrupted. Whenever he heard a step on the pavement outside, he drew the slide of his lantern and hid the light. If he had examined the iron shutters, he would have seen that his light could never pierce through them into the street. But he was not aware of this. Notwithstanding these occasional interruptions, he worked so hard and continuously, that the perspiration poured down him ere he had unscrewed those eighteen chests containing the pigs of lead. However, it was done at last, and then he refreshed himself with a draught from his flask. The next thing was, he took the three pigs of lead out of one of the cases marked Shannon, etc., and numbered fifteen, and laid them very gently on the floor. Then he transferred to that empty case the mixed contents of a case branded Proserpine 1, etc., and this he did with the utmost care and nicety, lest gold-dust spilled should tell tales. And so he went on and amused himself by shifting the contents of the whole eighteen cases marked Proserpine, etc., into eighteen cases marked Shannon, etc., and refilling them with the Shannon's lead. Frolicsome Mr. Wylie! Then he sat down on one of the cases Proserpined, and ate a biscuit and drank a little rum;

not much; for at this part of his career he was a very sober man, though he could fain drunkenness, or indeed any thing else.

The gold was all at his mercy, yet he did not pocket an ounce of it; not even a pennyweight to make a wedding-ring for Nancy Rouse. Mr. Wylie had a conscience. And a very original one it was; and, above all, he was very true to those he worked with. He carefully locked the gold cases up again, and resumed the screw-driver, for there was another heavy stroke of work to be done; and he went at it like a man. He carefully screwed down again, one after another, all those eighteen cases marked Shannon, which he had filled with gold dust, and then, heating a sailor's needle red-hot over his burning wick, he put his own secret marks on those eighteen cases—marks that no eye but his own could detect. By this time, though a very powerful man, he felt much exhausted, and would gladly have snatched an hour's repose. But, consulting his watch by the light of his lantern, he found the sun had just risen. He retired to his place of concealment in the same cat-like way he had come out of it—that is to say, he mounted on the high cases, and then slipped down behind them, into the angle of the wall.

As soon as the office opened, two sailors, whom he had carefully instructed over night, came with a boat for the cases; the warehouse was opened in consequence, but they were informed that Wylie must be present at the delivery.

"Oh, he won't be long," said they; "told us he would meet us here."

There was a considerable delay, and a good deal of talking, and presently Wylie was at their backs, and put in his word.

Seaton was greatly surprised at finding him there, and asked him where he had sprung from.

"Me!" said Wylie, jocosely, "why, I hailed from Davy Jones's locker last."

"I never heard you come in," said Seaton thoughtfully.

"Well, sir," replied Wylie civilly, "a man does learn to go like a cat on board ship, that is the truth. I came in at the door like my betters; but I thought I heard you mention my name, so I made no noise. Well, here I am anyway, and—Jack, how many trips can we take these thundering chests in? Let us see, eighteen for the Proserpine, and forty for the Shannon. Is that correct, sir?"

"Perfectly."

"Then, if you will deliver them, I'll check the delivery aboard the lighter there; and then we'll tow her alongside the ships."

Seaton called up two more clerks, and sent one to the boat, and one on board the barge. The barge was within hail; so the cases were checked as they passed out of the store, and checked again at the small boat, and also on board the lighter. When they were all cleared out, Wylie gave Seaton his receipt for them, and, having a steam-tug in attendance, towed the lighter alongside the Shannon first.

Seaton carried the receipt to his employer.

"But, sir," said he, "is this regular for an officer of the Proserpine to take the Shannon's cargo from us?"

"No, it is not regular," said the old gentleman; and he looked through a window and summoned Mr. Harcastle.

Hardcastle explained that the *Proserpine* shipped the gold, which was the more valuable consignment; and that he saw no harm in the officer who was so highly trusted by the merchant (on this and on former occasions) taking out a few tons of lead and copper to the *Shannon*.

"Well, sir," said Seaton, "suppose I was to go out and see the chests stowed in those vessels."

"I think you are making a fuss about nothing," said Hardcastle.

Mr. White was of the same opinion, but, being too wise to check zeal and caution, told Seaton he might go for his own satisfaction.

Seaton, with some difficulty, got a little boat and pulled across the harbor. He found the *Shannon* had shipped all the chests marked with her name; and the captain and mate of the *Proserpine* were beginning to ship theirs. He paddled under the *Proserpine*'s stern.

Captain Hudson, a rough salt, sang out, and asked him roughly what he wanted there.

"Oh, it is all right," said the mate; "he is come for your receipt and Hewitt's. Be smart now, men; two on board, sixteen to come."

Seaton saw the chests marked *Proserpine* stowed in the *Proserpine*, and went ashore with Captain Hewitt's receipt of forty cases on board the *Shannon*, and Captain Hudson's of eighteen on board the *Proserpine*.

As he landed he met Lloyd's agent, and told him that a valuable freight he had just shipped. That gentleman merely remarked that both ships were underwritten in Sydney by the owners; but the freight was insured in London no doubt.

There was still something about this business Seaton did not quite like; perhaps it was in the haste of the shipments, or in the manner of the mate. At all events, it was too slight and subtle to be communicated to others, with any hope of convincing them; and, moreover, Seaton could not but own to himself that he hated Wardlaw, and was, perhaps, no fair judge of his acts, and even of the acts of his servants.

And soon a blow fell that drove the matter out of his head and heart. Miss Helen Rolleston called at the office, and, standing within a few feet of him, handed Hardcastle a letter from Arthur Wardlaw, directing that the ladies' cabin on board the *Shannon* should be placed at her disposal.

Hardcastle bowed low to Beauty and Station, and promised her the best possible accommodation on board the *Shannon*, bound for England next week.

As she retired, she cast one quiet glance round the office in search of Seaton's beard. But he had reduced its admired luxuriance, and trimmed it to a narrow mercantile point. She did not know his other features from Adam, and little thought that young man, bent double over his paper, was her preserver and *protégé*; still less that he was at this moment cold as ice, and quivering with misery from head to foot, because her own lips had just told him she was going to England in the *Shannon*.

Heart-broken, but still loving nobly, Seaton dragged himself down to the harbor, and went slowly on board the *Shannon* to secure Miss Rolleston every comfort.

Then, sick at heart as he was, he made inquiries into the condition of the vessel which was to be trusted with so precious a freight; and the old boatman who was rowing him, hearing him make these inquiries, told him he himself was always about, and had noticed the *Shannon*'s pumps were going every blessed night.

Seaton carried this intelligence directly to Lloyd's agent; he overhauled the ship, and ordered her into the graving dock for repairs.

Then Seaton, for White and Co., wrote to Miss Rolleston that the *Shannon* was not seaworthy, and could not sail for a month at the least.

The lady simply acknowledged Messrs. White's communication, and Seaton breathed again.

Wardlaw had made Miss Rolleston promise him faithfully to sail that month in his ship the *Shannon*. Now, she was a slave to her word, and constant of purpose; so when she found she could not sail in the *Shannon*, she called again on Messrs. White, and took her passage in the *Proserpine*. The essential thing to her mind was to sail when she had promised, and to go in a ship that belonged to her lover.

The *Proserpine* was to sail in ten days.

Seaton inquired into the state of the *Proserpine*. She was a good, sound vessel, and there was no excuse for detaining her.

Then he wrestled long and hard with the selfish part of his great love. Instead of turning sullen, he set himself to carrying out Helen Rolleston's will. He went on board the *Proserpine* and chose her the best stern-cabin.

General Rolleston had ordered Helen's cabin to be furnished, and the agent had put in the usual things, such as a standing bedstead with drawers beneath, chest of drawers, small table, two chairs, wash-stand, looking-glass, and swing-lamp.

But Seaton made several visits to the ship, and effected the following arrangements at his own cost. He provided a neat cocoa mat for her cabin deck, for comfort and foothold: he unshipped the regular six-paned stern windows, and put in single-pane plate glass; he fitted Venetian blinds, and hung two little rose-colored curtains to each of the windows; all so arranged as to be easily removed in case it should be necessary to ship dead-lights in heavy weather. He glazed the door leading to her bath-room and quarter-gallery with plate glass; he provided a light easy-chair, slung and fitted with grommets, to be hung on hooks screwed into the beams in the midship of the cabin. On this Helen could sit and read, and so become insensible to the motion of the ship. He fitted a small bookcase with a button, which could be raised when a book might be wanted; he fixed a strike-bell in her maid's cabin, communicating with two strikers in Helen's cabin; he selected books, taking care that the voyages and travels were prosperous ones. No "*Seaman's Recorder*," "*Life-boat Journal*," or "*Shipwrecks and Disasters in the British Navy*."

Her cabin was the after-cabin on the starboard side, was entered through the cuddy, had a door communicating with the quarter-gallery, two stern windows, and a dead-eye on deck. The maid's cabin was the port after-cabin; doors opened into cuddy and quarter-gallery. And a fine trouble Miss Rolleston had to get a maid to

accompany her; but at last a young woman offered to go with her for high wages, demurely suppressing the fact that she had just married one of the sailors, and would gladly have gone for nothing. Her name was Jane Holt, and her husband's Michael Donovan.

In one of Seaton's visits to the Proserpine he detected the mate and captain talking together, and looking at him with unfriendly eyes,—scowling at him would hardly be too strong a word.

However, he was in no state of mind to care much how two animals in blue jackets received his acts of self-martyrdom. He was there to do the last kind offices of despairing love for the angel that had crossed his dark path, and illumined it for a moment, to leave it now forever.

At last the fatal evening came; her last in Sydney.

Then Seaton's fortitude, sustained no longer by the feverish stimulus of doing kindly acts for her, began to give way, and he desponded deeply.

At nine in the evening he crept upon General Rolleston's lawn, where he had first seen her. He sat down in sullen despair, upon the very spot.

Then he came nearer the house. There was a lamp in the dining-room; he looked in and saw her.

She was seated at her father's knee, looking up at him fondly; her hand was in his; the tears were in their eyes; she had no mother; he no son; they loved one another devotedly. This, their tender gesture, and their sad silence, spoke volumes to any one that had known sorrow. Poor Seaton sat down on the dewy grass outside, and wept because she was weeping.

Her father sent her to bed early. Seaton watched, as he had often done before, till her light went out; and then he flung himself on the wet grass, and stared at the sky in utter misery.

The mind is often clearest in the middle of the night; and all of a sudden, he saw, as if written on the sky, that she was going to England expressly to marry Arthur Wardlaw.

At this revelation he started up, stung with hate as well as love, and his tortured mind rebelled furiously. He repeated his vow that this should never be; and soon a scheme came into his head to prevent it; but it was a project so wild and dangerous, that, even as his heated brain hatched it, his cooler judgment said, "Fly, madman, fly! or this love will *destroy* you!"

He listened to the voice of reason, and in another minute he was out of the premises. He fluttered to his lodgings.

When he got there he could not go in; he turned and fluttered about the streets, not knowing or caring whither; his mind was in a whirl; and, what with his bodily fever and his boiling heart, passion began to overpower reason, that had held out so gallantly till now. He found himself at the harbor, staring with wild and bloodshot eyes at the Proserpine, he who, an hour ago, had seen that he had but one thing to do,—to try and forget young Wardlaw's bride. He groaned aloud, and ran wildly back into the town. He hurried up and down one narrow street, raging inwardly, like some wild beast in its den.

By-and-by his mood changed, and he hung round a lamp-post, and fell to moaning and lamenting his hard fate, and hers.

A policeman came up, took him for a maudlin drunkard, and half advised, half admonished, him to go home.

At that he gave a sort of fierce, despairing snarl, and ran into the next street, to be alone.

In this street he found a shop open, and lighted, though it was but five o'clock in the morning. It was a barber's, whose customers were working-people. HAIR-CUTTING, SIXPENCE. EASY SHAVING, THREEPENCE. HOT COFFEE, FOURPENCE THE CUP. Seaton's eye fell upon this shop. He looked at it fixedly a moment from the opposite side of the way, and then hurried on.

He turned suddenly and came back. He crossed the road and entered the shop. The barber was leaning over the stove, removing a can of boiling water from the fire to the hob. He turned at the sound of Seaton's step, and revealed an ugly countenance, rendered sinister by a squint.

Seaton dropped into a chair, and said, "I want my beard taken off."

The man looked at him, if it could be called looking at him, and said, dryly, "Oh, do ye? How much am I to have for that job?"

"You know your own charge."

"Of course I do: threepence a chin."

"Very well. Be quick then."

"Stop a bit: that is my charge to working-folk. I must have something more off you."

"Very well, man, I'll pay you double."

"My price to you is ten shillings."

"Why, what is that for?" asked Seaton, in some alarm; he thought, in his confusion, the man must have read his heart.

"I'll tell ye why," said the squinting barber.

"No, I won't: I'll show ye." He brought a small mirror, and suddenly clapped it before Seaton's eyes. Seaton started at his own image; wild, ghastly, and the eyes so bloodshot. The barber chuckled. This start was an extorted compliment to his own sagacity. "Now wasn't I right?" said he; "did I ought to take the bead off such a mug as that—for less than ten shillings?"

"I see," groaned Seaton; "you think I have committed some crime. One man sees me weeping with misery; he calls me a drunkard; another sees me pale with the anguish of my breaking heart; he calls me a felon: may God's curse light on him and you, and all mankind!"

"All right," said the squinting barber, apathetically; "my price is ten bob, whether or no."

Seaton felt in his pockets. "I have not got the money about me," said he.

"Oh, I'm not particular; leave your watch."

Seaton handed the squinting vampire his watch without another word, and let his head fall upon his breast.

The barber cut his beard close with the scissors, and made trivial remarks from time to time, but received no reply.

At last, Extortion having put him in a good-humor, he said, "Don't be so down-hearted, my lad. You are not the first that has got into trouble, and had to change faces."

Seaton vouchsafed no reply.

The barber shaved him clean, and was astonished at the change, and congratulated him. "Nobody will ever know you," said he; "and I'll tell you why; your mouth, it is inclined to

turn up a little; now a mustache it bends down, and that alters such a mouth as yours entirely. But, I'll tell you what, taking off this beard shows me something: *you are a gentleman!* Make it a sovereign, sir."

Seaton staggered out of the place without a word.

"Sulky, eh?" muttered the barber. He gathered up some of the long hair he had cut off Seaton's chin with his scissors, admired it, and put it away in paper.

While thus employed, a regular customer looked in for his cup of coffee. It was the policeman who had taken Seaton for a convivial soul.

CHAPTER VII.

GENERAL ROLLESTON'S servants made several trips to the *Proserpine*, carrying boxes, etc.

But Helen herself clung to the house till the last moment. "Oh, papa!" she cried, "I need all my resolution, all my good faith, to keep my word with Arthur, and leave you. Why, why did I promise? Why am I such a slave to my word?"

"Because," said the old General, with a voice not so firm as usual, "I have always told you that a lady is not to be inferior to a gentleman in any virtue except courage. I've heard my mother say so often; and I've taught it to my Helen. And, my girl, where would be the merit of keeping our word, if we only kept it when it cost us nothing?"

He promised to come after, in three months at farthest, and the brave girl dried her tears as well as she could, not to add to the sadness he fought against as gallantly as he had often fought the enemies of his country.

The *Proserpine* was to sail at two o'clock: at a little before one, a gentleman boarded her, and informed the captain that he was a missionary, the Rev. John Hazel, returning home, after a fever: and wished to take a berth in the *Proserpine*.

The mate looked him full in the face; and then told him there was very little accommodation for passengers, and it had all been secured by White and Co. for a young lady and her servants.

Mr. Hazel replied that his means were small, and moderate accommodation would serve him; but he must go to England without delay.

Captain Hudson put in his gracious word: "Then jump off the jetty at high tide and swim there; no room for black coats in my ship."

Mr. Hazel looked from one to the other piteously. "Show me some mercy, gentlemen; my very life depends on it."

"Very sorry, sir," said the mate; "but it is impossible. There's the Shannon, you can go in her."

"But she is under repairs, so I am told."

"Well, there are a hundred and fifty carpenters on to her; and she will come out of port on our wake."

"Now, sir," said Hudson, roughly, "bundle down the ship's side again if you please; this is a busy time. Hy!—rig the whip; here's the lady coming off to us."

The missionary heaved a deep sigh, and went

down into the boat that had brought him. But he was no sooner seated than he ordered the boatmen, somewhat peremptorily, to pull ashore as fast as they could row.

His boat met the Rollestons, father and daughter, coming out, and he turned his pale face and eyed them as he passed. Helen Rolleston was struck with that sorrowful countenance, and whispered her father, "That poor clergyman has just left the ship." She made sure he had been taking leave of some beloved one, bound for England. General Rolleston looked round, but the boats had passed each other, and the wan face was no longer visible.

They were soon on board, and received with much obsequiousness. Helen was shown her cabin, and, observing the minute and zealous care that had been taken of her comfort, she said, "Somebody who loves me has been here," and turned her brimming eyes on her father. He looked quite puzzled; but said nothing.

Father and daughter were then left alone in the cabin, till the ship began to heave up her anchor (she lay just at the mouth of the harbor), and then the boatswain was sent to give General Rolleston warning. Helen came up with him, pale and distressed. They exchanged a last embrace, and General Rolleston went down the ship's side. Helen hung over the bulwarks and waved her last adieu, though she could hardly see him for her tears.

At this moment a four-oared boat swept alongside; and Mr. Hazel came on board again. He presented Hudson a written order to give the Rev. John Hazel a passage in the small berth abreast the main hatches. It was signed "For White and Co., James Seaton;" and was indorsed with a stamped acknowledgment of the passage-money, twenty-seven pounds.

Hudson and Wylie, the mate, put their heads together over this. The missionary saw them consulting, and told them he had mentioned their mysterious conduct to Messrs. White and Co., and that Mr. Seaton had promised to stop the ship if their authority was resisted. "And I have paid my passage-money, and will not be turned out now except by force," said the reverend gentleman, quietly.

Wylie's head was turned away from Mr. Hazel's, and on its profile a most gloomy, vindictive look, so much so that Mr. Hazel was startled when the man turned his front face to him with a jolly, genial air, and said, "Well, sir, the truth is, we seamen don't want passengers aboard ships of this class; they get in our way whenever it blows a capful. However, since you are here, make yourself as comfortable as you can."

"There, that is enough palaver," said the captain, in his offensive way. "Hoist the parson's traps aboard; and sheer off, you. Anchor's apeak."

He then gave his orders in stentorian roars; the anchor was hove up, catted and fished; one sail went up after another, the *Proserpine's* head came round, and away she bore for England with a fair wind.

General Rolleston went slowly and heavily home, and often turned his head and looked wistfully at the ship putting out wing upon wing, and carrying off his child like a tiny prey.

To change the comparison, it was only a tender vine detached from a great sturdy elm: yet the tree, thus relieved of its delicate encumbrance, felt bare; and a soft thing was gone, that, seeking protection, had bestowed warmth; had nestled and curled between the world's cold wind and that stalwart stem.

As soon as he got home he lighted a cigar, and set to work to console himself by reflecting that it was but a temporary parting, since he had virtually resigned his post, and was only waiting in Sydney till he should have handed his papers in order over to his successor, and settled one or two private matters that could not take three months.

When he had smoked his cigar, and reasoned away his sense of desolation, Nature put out her hand, and took him by the breast, and drew him gently up-stairs to take a look at his beloved daughter's bedroom, by way of seeing the last of her.

The room had one window looking south, and another west; the latter commanded a view of the sea. General Rolleston looked down at the floor, littered with odds and ends,—the dead leaves of dress that fall about a lady in the great process of packing,—and then gazed through the window at the flying Proserpine.

He sighed, and lighted another cigar. Before he had half finished it, he stooped down and took up a little bow of ribbon that lay on the ground, and put it quietly in his bosom. In this act he was surprised by Sarah Wilson, who had come up to sweep all such waifs and strays into her own box.

"La, sir," said she, rather crossly, "why didn't you tell me, and I'd have tidied the room: it is all huggermugger, with Miss a leaving."

And with this she went to the washing-stand to begin. General Rolleston's eye followed her movements, and he observed the water in one of the basins was rather red. "What!" said he, "has she had an accident; cut her finger?"

"No, sir," said Wilson.

"Her nose been bleeding, then?"

"No, sir."

"Not from her finger,—nor—? Let me look."

He examined the basin narrowly, and his countenance fell. "Good heavens!" said he: "I wish I had seen this before; she should not have gone to-day. Was it the agitation of parting?"

"Oh no," said Wilson; "don't go to fancy that. Why, it is not the first time by a many."

"Not the first!" faltered Rolleston. "In Heaven's name why was I never told of this?"

"Indeed, sir," said Wilson, eagerly, "you must not blame me, sir. It was as much as my place was worth to tell you, Miss is a young lady that will be obeyed; and she give me strict orders not to let you know: but she is gone now; and I always thought it was a pity she kept it so dark; but, as I was saying, sir, she would be obeyed."

"Kept what so dark?"

"Why, sir, her spitting of blood at times; and turning so thin by what she used to be, poor dear young lady."

General Rolleston groaned aloud. "And this she hid from me; from me?" He said no more, but kept looking bewildered and helpless,

first at the basin, discolored by his daughter's blood, and then at the Proserpine, that was carrying her away, perhaps forever; and, at the double sight, his iron features worked with cruel distress; anguish so mute and male, that the woman Wilson, though not good for much, sat down and shed genuine tears of pity.

But he summoned all his fortitude, told Wilson he could not say she was to blame, she had but obeyed her mistress's orders; and we must all obey orders. "But now," said he, "it is me you ought to obey: tell me, does any doctor attend her?"

"None ever comes here, sir. But one day she let fall that she went to Dr. Valentine, him that has the name for disorders of the chest."

In a very few minutes General Rolleston was at Dr. Valentine's house, and asked him bluntly what was the matter with his daughter.

"Disease of the lungs," said the doctor, simply.

The unhappy father then begged the doctor to give him his real opinion as to the degree of danger; and Dr. Valentine told him, with some feeling, that the case was not desperate, but was certainly alarming.

Remonstrated with for letting the girl undertake a sea voyage, he replied rather evasively at first; that the air of Sydney disagreed with his patient, and a sea voyage was more likely to do her good than harm, provided the weather was not downright tempestuous.

"And who is to insure me against that?" asked the afflicted father.

"Why, it is a good time of year," said Dr. Valentine; "and delay might have been fatal." Then, after a slight hesitation, "The fact is, sir," said he, "I gathered from her servant that a husband awaits Miss Rolleston in England; and I must tell you, what of course I did not tell her, that the sooner she enters the married state the better. In fact, it is her one chance, in my opinion."

General Rolleston pressed the doctor's hand, and went away without another word.

Only he hurried his matters of business; and took his passage in the Shannon.

It was in something of a warrior's spirit that he prepared to follow his daughter and protect her; but often he sighed at the invisible, insidious nature of the foe, and wished it could have been a fair fight of bullets and bayonets, and his own the life at stake.

The Shannon was soon ready for sea.

But the gentleman who was to take General Rolleston's post met with something better, and declined it.

General Rolleston, though chafing with impatience, had to give up going home in the Shannon. But an influential friend, Mr. Adolphus Savage, was informed of his difficulty, and obtained a year's leave of absence for him, and permission to put young Savage in as his *locum tenens*; which, by-the-by, is how politic men in general serve their friends.

The Shannon sailed, but not until an incident had occurred that must not be entirely passed over. Old Mr. White called on General Rolleston with a long face, and told him James Seaton had disappeared.

"Stolen any thing?"

"Not a shilling. Indeed the last thing the

poor fellow did was to give us a proof of his honesty. It seems a passenger paid him twenty-seven pounds for a berth in the *Proserpine* just before she sailed. Well, sir, he might have put this in his pocket, and nobody been the wiser: but no, he entered the transaction, and the numbers of the notes, and left the notes themselves in an envelope addressed to me. What I am most afraid of is, that some harm has come to him, poor lad."

"What day did he disappear?"

"The 11th of November."

"The day my daughter sailed for England," said General Rolleston, thoughtfully.

"Was it, sir? Yes, I remember. She went in the *Proserpine*."

General Rolleston knitted his brows in silence for some time; then he said, "I'll set the detectives on his track."

"Not to punish him, General. We don't want him punished."

"To punish him, protect him, or avenge him, as the case may require," was the reply, uttered very gravely.

Mr. White took his leave. General Rolleston rang the bell, and directed his servant to go for Hexham, the detective.

He then rang the bell again, and sent for Sarah Wilson. He put some searching questions to this woman; and his interrogatory had hardly concluded when Hexham was announced. General Rolleston dismissed the girl, and, looking now very grave indeed, asked the detective whether he remembered James Seaton.

"That I do, sir."

"He has levanted."

"Taken *much*, sir?"

"Not a shilling."

"Gone to the diggings?"

"That you must find out."

"What day was he first missed, sir?"

"Eleventh of November. The very day Miss Rolleston left."

Hexham took out a little greasy note-book, and examined it. "Eleventh of November," said he, "then I almost think I have got a clue, sir; but I shall know more when I have had a word with two parties." With this he retired.

But he came again at night, and brought General Rolleston some positive information; with this, however, we shall not trouble the reader just here: for General Rolleston himself related it, and the person to whom he did relate it, and the attendant circumstances, gave it a peculiar interest.

Suffice it to say here, that General Rolleston went on board the *Shannon* charged with curious information about James Seaton; and sailed for England in the wake of the *Proserpine*, and about two thousand miles astern.

CHAPTER VIII.

WARDLAW was at home before this with his hands full of business; and it is time the reader should be let into one secret at least, which this merchant had contrived to conceal from the City of London, and from his own father, and from every human creature, except one poor, simple devoted soul, called Michael Penfold.

There are men, who seem stupid, yet generally go right; there are also clever men, who appear to have the art of blundering wisely: "*sapienter descendunt in infernum*," as the ancients have it; and some of these latter will even lie on their backs, after a fall, and lift up their voices, and prove to you that in the nature of things they ought to have gone up, and their being down is monstrous; illusory.

Arthur Wardlaw was not quite so clever as all that; but still he misconducted the business of the firm with perfect ability from the first month he entered on it. Like those ambitious railways, which ruin a goodly trunk with excess of branches, not to say twigs, he set to work extending, and extending, and sent the sap of the healthy old concern a flying to the ends of the earth.

He was not only too ambitious, and not cool enough; he was also unlucky, or under a curse, or something; for things well conceived broke down in his hands, under petty accidents. And, besides, his new correspondents and agents hit him cruelly hard. Then what did he? Why, shot good money after bad, and lost both. He could not retrench, for his game was concealment; his father was kept in the dark, and drew his four thousand a year, as usual, and, upon any hesitation in that respect, would have called in an accountant and wound up the concern. But this tax upon the receipts, though inconvenient, was a trifle compared with the series of heavy engagements that were impending. The future was so black, that Wardlaw junior was sore tempted to realize twenty thousand pounds, which a man in his position could easily do, and fly the country. But this would have been to give up Helen Rolleston; and he loved her too well. His brain was naturally subtle and fertile in expedients; so he brought all its powers to bear on a double problem,—how to marry Helen, and restore the concern he had mismanaged to its former state. For this, a large sum of money was needed, not less than ninety thousand pounds.

The difficulties were great; but he entered on this project with two advantages. In the first place, he enjoyed excellent credit; in the second, he was not disposed to be scrupulous. He had been cheated several times; and nothing undermines feeble rectitude more than that. Such a man as Wardlaw is apt to establish a sort of account current with humanity.

"Several fellow-creatures have cheated me. Well, I must get as much back, by hook or by crook, from several fellow-creatures."

After much hard thought, he conceived his double master-stroke: and it was to execute this he went out to Australia.

We have seen that he persuaded Helen Rolleston to come to England and be married; but, as to the other part of his project, that is a matter for the reader to watch, as it develops itself.

His first act of business, on reaching England, was to insure the freights of the *Proserpine* and the *Shannon*.

He sent Michael Penfold to Lloyd's with the requisite vouchers, including the receipts of the gold merchants. Penfold easily insured the *Shannon*, whose freight was valued at only six thousand pounds. The *Proserpine*, with her cargo, and a hundred and thirty thousand pounds

of specie to boot, was another matter. Some underwriters had an objection to specie, being subject to theft as well as shipwreck; other underwriters, applied to by Penfold, acquiesced; others called on Wardlaw himself, to ask a few questions, and he replied to them courteously, but with a certain nonchalance, treating it as an affair which might be big to them, but was not of particular importance to a merchant doing business on his scale.

To one underwriter, Condell, with whom he was on somewhat intimate terms, he said, "I wish I could insure the Shannon at her value; but that is impossible: the City of London could not do it. The Proserpine brings me some cases of specie, but my true treasure is on board the Shannon. She carries my bride, sir."

"Oh, indeed! Miss Rolleston?"

"Ah, I remember; you have seen her. Then you will not be surprised at a proposal I shall make you. Underwrite the Shannon a million pounds, to be paid by you if harm befalls my Helen. You need not look so astonished; I was only joking; you gentlemen deal with none but substantial values; and, as for me, a million would no more compensate me for losing her, than for losing my own life."

The tears were in his pale eyes as he said these words; and Mr. Condell eyed him with sympathy. But he soon recovered himself, and was the man of business again. "Oh, the specie on board the Proserpine? Well, I was in Australia, you know, and bought that specie myself of the merchants whose names are attached to the receipts. I deposited the cases with White and Co. at Sydney. Penfold will show you the receipt. I intrusted Joseph Wylie, mate of the Proserpine, and a trustworthy person, to see them stowed away in the Proserpine by White and Co. Hudson is a good seaman; and the Proserpine a new ship, built by Mare. We have nothing to fear but the ordinary perils of the sea."

"So one would think," said Mr. Condell, and took his leave; but, at the door, he hesitated, and then, looking down a little sheepishly, said, "Mr. Wardlaw, may I offer you a piece of advice?"

"Certainly."

"Then, double the insurance on the Shannon, if you can."

With these words he slipped out, evidently to avoid questions he did not intend to answer.

Wardlaw stared after him, stupidly at first, and then stood up and put his hand to his head in a sort of amazement. Then he sat down again, ashly pale, and with the dew on his forehead, and muttered faintly, "Double—the insurance—of the—Shannon!"

Men who walk in crooked paths are very subject to such surprises; doomed, like Ahab, to be pierced, through the joints of their armor, by random shafts; by words uttered in one sense, but conscience interprets them in another.

It took a good many underwriters to insure the Proserpine's freight; but the business was done at last.

Then Wardlaw, who had feigned *insouciance* so admirably in that part of his interview with Condell, went, without losing an hour, and raised a large sum of money on the insured freight, to meet the bills that were coming due for the gold

(for he had paid for most of it in paper at short dates), and also other bills that were approaching maturity. This done, he breathed again, safe for a month or two from every thing short of a general panic, and full of hope from his coming master-stroke. But two months soon pass when a man has a flock of kites in the air. Pass? They fly. So now he looked out anxiously for his Australian ships; and went to Lloyd's every day to hear if either had been seen, or heard of by steamers, or by faster sailing vessels than themselves.

And, though Condell had underwritten the Proserpine to the tune of eight thousand pounds, yet still his mysterious words rang strangely in the merchant's ears, and made him so uneasy that he employed a discreet person to sound Condell as to what he meant by "double the insurance of the Shannon."

It turned out to be the simplest affair in the world; Condell had secret information that the Shannon was in bad repair, so he had advised his friend to insure her heavily. For the same reason, he declined to underwrite her freight himself.

With respect to those ships, our readers already know two things, of which Wardlaw himself, *nota bene*, had no idea; namely, that the Shannon had sailed last, instead of first, and that Miss Rolleston was not on board of her, but in the Proserpine, two thousand miles ahead.

To that, your superior knowledge, we, posters of the sea and land, are about to make a large addition, and relate things strange, but true. While that anxious and plotting merchant strains his eyes seaward, trying hard to read the future, we carry you, in a moment of time, across the Pacific, and board the leading vessel, the good ship Proserpine, homeward bound.

The ship left Sydney with a fair wind, but soon encountered adverse weather, and made slow progress, being close-hauled, which was her worst point of sailing. She pitched a good deal, and that had a very ill effect on Miss Rolleston. She was not seasick, but thoroughly out of sorts: and, in one week, became perceptibly paler and thinner than when she started.

The young clergyman, Mr. Hazel, watched her with respectful anxiety, and this did not escape her feminine observation. She noted quietly that those dark eyes of his followed her with a mournful tenderness, but withdrew their gaze when she looked at him. Clearly, he was interested in her, but had no desire to intrude upon her attention. He would bring up the squabs for her, and some of his own wraps, when she staid on deck, and was prompt with his arm when the vessel lurched; and showed her those other little attentions which are called for on board ship, but without a word. Yet, when she thanked him in the simplest and shortest way, his great eyes flashed with pleasure, and the color mounted to his very temples.

Engaged young ladies are, for various reasons, more sociable with the other sex than those who are still on the universal mock-defensive: a ship, like a distant country, thaws even English reserve, and women in general are disposed to admit ecclesiastics to certain privileges. No wonder then that Miss Rolleston, after a few days, met Mr. Hazel half-way; and they made acquaintance on board the Proserpine, in mono-

syllables at first; but, the ice once fairly broken, the intercourse of mind became rather rapid.

At first it was a mere intellectual exchange, but one very agreeable to Miss Rolleston; for a fine memory, and omnivorous reading from his very boyhood, with the habit of taking notes, and reviewing them, had made Mr. Hazel a walking dictionary, and a walking essayist if required.

But when it came to something which most of all the young lady had hoped from this temporary acquaintance, viz., religious instruction, she found him indeed as learned on that as on other topics, but cold, and devoid of unction: so much so that one day she said to him, "I can hardly believe you have ever been a missionary." But at that he seemed so distressed, that she was sorry for him, and said sweetly, "Excuse me, Mr. Hazel, my remark was in rather bad taste, I fear."

"Not at all," said he. "Of course I am unfit for missionary work, or I should not be here."

Miss Rolleston took a good look at him, but said nothing. However, his reply and her perusal of his countenance satisfied her that he was a man with very little petty vanity and petty irritability.

One day they were discoursing of gratitude; and Mr. Hazel said he had a poor opinion of those persons who speak of "the burden of gratitude," and make a fuss about being "laid under an obligation."

"As for me," said he, "I have owed such a debt, and found the sense of it very sweet."

"But perhaps you were always hoping to make a return," said Helen.

"That I was: hoping against hope."

"Do you think people are grateful, in general?"

"No, Miss Rolleston, I do not."

"Well, I think they are. To me, at least. Why, I have experienced gratitude even in a convict. It was a poor man, who had been transported for something or other, and he begged papa to take him for his gardener. Papa did, and he was so grateful that, do you know, he suspected our house was to be robbed, and he actually watched in the garden night after night: and, what do you think? the house was attacked by a whole gang; but poor Mr. Seaton confronted them and shot one, and was wounded cruelly; but he beat them off for us; and was not that gratitude?"

While she was speaking so earnestly, Mr. Hazel's blood seemed to run through his veins like heavenly fire, but he said nothing, and the lady resumed with gentle fervor, "Well, we got him a clerk's place in a shipping-office, and heard no more of him; but he did not forget us; my cabin here was fitted up with every comfort, and every delicacy. I thanked papa for it; but he looked so blank I saw directly he knew nothing about it; and, now I think of it, it was Mr. Seaton. I am positive it was. Poor fellow! And I should not even know him if I saw him."

Mr. Hazel observed, in a low voice, that Mr. Seaton's conduct did not seem wonderful to him. "Still," said he, "one is glad to find there is some good left even in a criminal."

"A criminal," cried Helen Rolleston, firing up. "Pray, who says he was a criminal? Mr. Hazel, once for all, no friend of mine ever de-

serves such a name as that. A friend of mine may commit some great error or imprudence; but that is all. The poor grateful soul was never guilty of any downright wickedness: *that stands to reason.*"

Mr. Hazel did not encounter this feminine logic with his usual ability; he muttered something or other, with a trembling lip, and left her so abruptly, that she asked herself whether she had inadvertently said any thing that could have offended him; and awaited an explanation. But none came. The topic was never revived by Mr. Hazel; and his manner, at their next meeting, showed he liked her none the worse that she stood up for her friends.

The wind steady from the west for two whole days, and the Proserpine showed her best sailing qualities, and ran four hundred and fifty miles in that time.

Then came a dead calm, and the sails flapped lazily, and the masts described an arc; and the sun broiled; and the sailors whistled; and the captain drank; and the mate encouraged him.

During this calm Miss Rolleston fell downright ill, and quitted the deck. Then Mr. Hazel was very sad: borrowed all the books in the ship, and read them, and took notes: and, when he had done this, he was at leisure to read men, and so began to study Hiram Hudson, Joseph Wylio, and others, and take a few notes about them.

From these we select some that are better worth the reader's attention than any thing we could relate in our own persons at this stagnant part of the story.

PASSAGES FROM MR. HAZEL'S DIARY.

"CHARACTERS ON BOARD THE PROSERPINE.

"There are two sailors, messmates, who have formed an antique friendship; their names are John Welch and Samuel Cooper. Welch is a very able seaman, and a chatterbox. Cooper is a good sailor, but very silent; only what he does say is much to the purpose.

"The gabble of Welch is agreeable to the silent Cooper; and Welch admires Cooper's taciturnity.

"I asked Welch what made him like Cooper so much. And he said, 'Why, you see, sir, he is my messmate, for one thing, and a seaman that knows his work; and then he has been well eddyated, and he knows when to hold his tongue, does Sam.'

"I asked Cooper why he was so fond of Welch. He only grunted in an uneasy way at first; but when I pressed for a reply, he let out two words, 'Capital company;' and got away from me.

"Their friendship, though often roughly expressed, is really a tender and touching sentiment. I think either of these sailors would bare his back and take a dozen lashes in place of his messmate. I too once thought I had made such a friend. Eheu!

"Both Cooper and Welch seem, by their talk, to consider the ship a living creature. Cooper chews. Welch only smokes, and often lets his pipe out: he is so voluble.

"Captain Hudson is quite a character: or,

I might say two characters; for he is one man when he is sober, and another when he is the worse for liquor: and that I am sorry to see is very often. Captain Hudson, sober, is a rough, bearish seaman, with a quick, experienced eye, that takes in every rope in the ship, as he walks up and down his quarter-deck. He either evades or bluntly declines conversation, and gives his whole mind to sailing his ship.

"Captain Hudson, drunk, is a garrulous man, who seems to have drifted back into the past. He comes up to you and talks of his own accord, and always about himself, and what he did fifteen or twenty years since. He forgets whatever has occurred half an hour ago; and his eye, which was an eagle's, is now a mole's. He no longer sees what his sailors are doing aloft or aloft; to be sure, he no longer cares; his present ship may take care of herself while he is talking of his past ones. But the surest indicia of inebriety in Hudson are these two. First, his nose is red. Secondly, he discourses upon a seaman's *duty to his employers*. Ebruius rings the changes on his 'duty to his employers' till drowsiness attacks his hearers. *Cicero de officiis* was all very well at a certain period of one's life: but *bibulus nauta de officiis* is rather too much.

"N.B.—Except when his nose is red, not a word about his 'duty to his employers.' That phrase, like a fine lady, never ventures into the morning air. It is purely post-prandial, and sacred to occasions when he is utterly neglecting his duty to his employers, and to every body else.

"All this is ridiculous enough, but somewhat alarming. To think that *her* precious life should be intrusted to the care and skill of so unreliable a captain!

"Joseph Wylie, the mate, is less eccentric, but even more remarkable. He is one of those powerfully built fellows whom Nature, one would think, constructed to gain all their ends by force and directness. But no such thing; he goes about as softly as a cat; is always popping out of holes and corners; and I can see he watches me, and tries to hear what I say to her. He is civil to me when I speak to him; yet I notice he avoids me quietly. Altogether there is something about him that puzzles me. Why was he so reluctant to let me on board as a passenger? Why did he tell a downright falsehood? For he said there was no room for me; yet, even now, there are two cabins vacant, and he has taken possession of them.

"The mate of this ship has several barrels of spirits in his cabin, or rather, cabins, and it is he who makes the captain drunk. I learned this from one of the boys. This looks ugly. I fear Wylie is a bad, designing man, who wishes to ruin the captain, and so get his place. But, meantime, the ship might be endangered by this drunkard's misconduct. I shall watch Wylie closely, and perhaps put the captain on his guard against this false friend.

"Last night a breeze got up about sunset, and H. R. came on deck for half an hour. I welcomed her as calmly as I could; but I felt my voice tremble and my heart throb. She told me the voyage tired her much; but it was the last she should have to make. How strange, how hellish (God forgive me for saying so!) it seems that *she* should love *him*. But, does she love

him? Can she love him? Could she love him if she knew all? Know him she shall before she marries him. For the present, be still, my heart.

"She soon went below and left me desolate. I wandered all about the ship, and, at last, I came upon the inseparables, Welch and Cooper. They were squatted on the deck, and Welch's tongue going as usual. He was talking about this Wylie, and saying that, in all his ships, he had never known such a mate as this; why, the captain was under his thumb. He then gave a string of captains, each of whom would have given his mate a round dozen at the gangway, if he had taken so much on him as this one does.

"Grog! suggested Cooper, in extenuation.

"Welch admitted Wylie was liberal with that, and friendly enough with the men; but still, he preferred to see a ship commanded by the captain, and not by a lubber like Wylie.

"I expressed some surprise at this term, and said I had envied Wylie's nerves in a gale of wind we encountered early in the voyage.

"The talking sailor explained, 'In course, he has been to sea afore this, and weathered many a gale. But so has the cook. That don't make a man a sailor. You ask him how to send down a to'-gallant yard or gammon a bowsprit, or even mark a lead line, and he'll stare at ye, like Old Nick, when the angel caught him with the red-hot tongs, and questioned him out of the Church Catechism. Ask Sam there, if ye don't believe me. Sam, what do you think of this Wylie for a seaman?'

"Cooper could not afford any thing so precious, in his estimate of things, as a word; but he lifted a great brawny hand, and gave a snap with his finger and thumb, that disposed of the mate's pretensions to seamanship more expressively than words could have done it.

"The breeze has freshened, and the ship glides rapidly through the water, bearing us all homeward. Helen Rolleston has resumed her place upon the deck; and all seems bright again. I ask myself how we existed without the sight of her.

"This morning the wind shifted to the south-west; the captain surprised us by taking in sail. But his sober eye had seen something more than ours; for at noon it blew a gale, and by sunset it was deemed prudent to bring the ship's head to the wind, and we are now lying to. The ship lurches, and the wind howls through the bare rigging; but she rides buoyantly, and no danger is apprehended.

"Last night, as I lay in my cabin, unable to sleep, I heard some heavy blows strike the ship's side repeatedly, causing quite a vibration. I felt alarmed, and went out to tell the captain. But I was obliged to go on my hands and knees, such was the force of the wind. Passing the mate's cabin, I heard sounds that made me listen acutely; and I then found the blows were being struck inside the ship. I got to the captain and told him. 'Oh,' said he, 'ten to one it's the mate nailing down his chests, or the like.'" But I assured him the blows struck the side of the ship, and, at my earnest request, he came out and listened. He swore a great oath, and said the lubber would be through the ship's side. He then tried the cabin door, but it was locked.

"The sounds ceased directly.

"We called to the mate, but received no reply for a long time. At last Wylie came out of the gun-room, looking rather pale, and asked what was the matter.

"I told him he ought to know best, for the blows were heard where he had just come from.

"'Blows!' said he; 'I believe you. Why, a tierce of butter had got adrift, and was bumping up and down the hold like thunder.' He then asked us whether that was what we had disturbed him for, entered his cabin, and almost slammed the door in our faces.

"I remarked to the captain on his disrespectful conduct. The captain was civil, and said I was right; he was a cross-grained unmanageable brute, and he wished he was out of the ship. 'But you see, sir, he has got the ear of the merchant ashore; and so I am obliged to hold a candle to the devil, as the saying is.' He then fired a volley of oaths and abuse at the offender; and, not to encourage foul language, I retired to my cabin.

"The wind declined towards daybreak, and the ship recommenced her voyage at 8 A.M., but under treble-reefed topsails and reefed courses.

"I caught the captain and mate talking together in the friendliest way possible. That Hudson is a humbug; there is some mystery between him and the mate.

"To-day H. R. was on deck, for several hours, conversing sweetly, and looking like the angel she is. But happiness soon flies from me; a steamer came in sight, bound for Sydney. She signalled us to heave to, and send a boat. This was done, and the boat brought back a letter for her. It seems they took us for the Shannon, in which ship she was expected.

"The letter was from *him*. How her cheek flushed and her eye beamed as she took it. And oh, the sadness, the agony, that stood beside her unheeded.

"I left the deck; I could not have contained myself. What a thing is wealth! By wealth, that wretch can stretch out his hand across the ocean, and put a letter into her hand under my very eye. Away goes all that I have gained by being near her while he is far away. He is not in England now,—he is here. His odious presence has driven me from her. Oh that I could be a child again, or in my grave, to get away from this Hell of Love and Hate."

At this point we beg leave to take the narrative into our own hands again.

Mr. Hazel actually left the deck to avoid the sight of Helen Rolleston's flushed cheek and beaming eyes, reading Arthur Wardlaw's letter.

And here we may as well observe that he retired not merely because the torture was hard to bear. He had some disclosures to make, on reaching England; but his good sense told him this was not the time or the place to make them, nor Helen Rolleston the person to whom, in the first instance, they ought to be made.

While he tries to relieve his swelling heart by putting its throbs on paper (and, in truth, this is some faint relief, for want of which many a less unhappy man than Hazel has gone mad), let us stay by the lady's side, and read her letter with her.

"Russell Square, Dec. 15, 1865.

"MY DEAR LOVE:—Hearing that the Antelope steam-packet was going to Sydney, by way of Cape Horn, I have begged the captain, who is under some obligations to me, to keep a good lookout for the Shannon, homeward bound, and board her with these lines, weather permitting.

"Of course the chances are you will not receive them at sea; but still you possibly may; and my heart is so full of you, I seize any excuse for overflowing; and then I picture to myself that bright face reading an unexpected letter in mid-ocean, and so I taste beforehand the greatest pleasure my mind can conceive,—the delight of giving you pleasure, my own sweet Helen.

"News, I have little. You know how deeply and devotedly you are beloved,—know it so well that I feel words are almost wasted in repeating it. Indeed, the time, I hope, is at hand when the word 'love' will hardly be mentioned between us. For my part, I think it will be too visible in every act, and look, and word of mine, to need repetition. We do not speak much about the air we live in. We breathe it, and speak with it, not of it.

"I suppose all lovers are jealous. I think I should go mad if you were to give me a rival; but then I do not understand that ill-natured jealousy which would rob the beloved object of all affections but the one. I know my Helen loves her father,—loves him, perhaps, as well, or better, than she does me. Well, in spite of that, I love him too. Do you know, I never see that erect form, that model of courage and probity, come into a room, but I say to myself, 'Here comes my benefactor; but for this man there would be no Helen in the world.' Well, dearest, an unexpected circumstance has given me a little military influence (these things do happen in the City); and I really believe that, what with his acknowledged merits (I am secretly informed a very high personage said, the other day, he had not received justice), and the influence I speak of, a post will shortly be offered to your father that will enable him to live, henceforth, in England, with comfort, I might say, affluence. Perhaps he might live with us. That depends upon himself.

"Looking forward to this, and my own still greater happiness, diverts my mind awhile from the one ever pressing anxiety. But, alas! it will return. By this time my Helen is on the seas,—the terrible, the treacherous, the cruel seas, that spare neither beauty nor virtue, nor the longing hearts at home. I have conducted this office for some years, and thought I knew care and anxiety. But I find I knew neither till now.

"I have two ships at sea, the Shannon and the Proserpine. The Proserpine carries eighteen chests of specie, worth a hundred and thirty thousand pounds. I don't care one straw whether she sinks or swims. But the Shannon carries my darling; and every gust at night awakens me, and every day I go into the great room at Lloyd's and watch the anemometer. O God! be merciful, and bring my angel safe to me! O God! be just, and strike her not for my offenses!

"Besides the direct perils of the sea, are some others you might escape by prudence. Pray avoid the night air, for my sake, who could not

live if any evil befell you ; and be careful in your diet. You were not looking so well as usual when I left. Would I had words to make you know your own value. Then you would feel it a *duty* to be prudent.

"But I must not sadden you with my fears ; let me turn to my hopes. How bright they are ! what joy, what happiness, is sailing towards me, nearer and nearer every day ! I ask myself what am I that such paradise should be mine.

"My love, when we are one, shall we share every thought, or shall I keep commerce, speculation, and its temptations away from your pure spirit ? Sometimes I think I should like to have neither thought nor occupation unshared by you ; and that you would purify trade itself by your contact ; at other times I say to myself, 'Oh, never soil that angel with your miserable business ; but go home to her as if you were going from earth to heaven, for a few blissful hours.' But you shall decide this question, and every other.

"Must I close this letter ? Must I say no more, though I have scarcely begun ?

"Yes, I will end, since, perhaps, you will never see it.

"When I have sealed it, I mean to hold it in my clasped hands, and so pray the Almighty to take it safe to you, and to bring you safe to him who can never know peace nor joy till he sees you once more. Your devoted and anxious lover,

ARTHUR WARDLAW."

Helen Rolleston read this letter more than once. She liked it none the less for being disconnected and unbusiness-like. She had seen her Arthur's business letters ; models of courteous conciseness. She did not value such compositions. This one she did. She smiled over it, all beaming and blushing ; she kissed it, and read it again, and sat with it in her lap.

But by-and-by her mood changed, and, when Mr. Hazel ventured upon deck again, he found her with her forehead sinking on her extended arm, and the lax hand of that same arm holding the letter. She was crying.

The whole drooping attitude was so lovely, so feminine, yet so sad, that Hazel stood irresolute, looking wistfully at her.

She caught sight of him, and, by a natural impulse, turned gently away, as if to hide her tears. But the next moment she altered her mind, and said, with a quiet dignity that came naturally to her at times, "Why should I hide my care from you, sir ? Mr. Hazel, may I speak to you as a *clergyman* ?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Hazel, in a somewhat faint voice.

She pointed to a seat, and he sat down near her.

She was silent for some time ; her lip quivered a little ; she was struggling inwardly for that decent composure which on certain occasions distinguishes the lady from the mere woman ; and it was with a pretty firm voice she said what follows :—

"I am going to tell you a little secret : one I have kept from my own father. It is,—that I have not very long to live."

Her hazel eye rested calmly on his face while she said these words quietly.

He received them with amazement at first ; amazement, that soon deepened into horror.

"What do you mean ?" he gasped. "What words are these ?"

"Thank you for minding so much," said she sweetly. "I will tell you I have fits of coughing, not frequent, but violent ; and then blood very often comes from my lungs. That is a bad sign, you know. I have been so for four months now, and I am a good deal wasted ; my hand used to be very plump, look at it now.—Poor Arthur !"

She turned away her head to drop a gentle, unselfish tear or two ; and Hazel stared with increasing alarm at the lovely but wasted hand she still held out to him, and glanced, too, at Arthur Wardlaw's letter, held slightly by the beloved fingers.

He said nothing, and, when she looked round again, he was pale and trembling. The revelation was so sudden.

"Pray be calm, sir," said she. "We need speak of this no more. But now, I think, you will not be surprised that I come to you for religious advice and consolation, short as our acquaintance is."

"I am in no condition to give them," said Hazel, in great agitation. "I can think of nothing but how to save you. May Heaven help me, and give me wisdom for that."

"This is idle," said Helen Rolleston, gently, but firmly. "I have had the best advice for months, and I get worse ; and, Mr. Hazel, I shall never be better. So aid me to bow to the will of Heaven. Sir, I do not repine at leaving the world ; but it does grieve me to think how my departure will affect those whose happiness is very, very dear to me."

She then looked at the letter, blushed, and hesitated a moment ; but ended by giving it to him whom she had applied to as her religious adviser.

"Oblige me by reading that. And, when you have, I think you will grant me a favor I wish to ask you. Poor fellow ! so full of hopes that I am doomed to disappoint."

She rose to hide her emotion, and left Arthur Wardlaw's letter in the hands of him who loved her, if possible, more devotedly than Arthur Wardlaw did ; and she walked the deck pensively, little dreaming how strange a thing she had done.

As for Hazel, he was in a situation poignant with agony ; only the heavy blow that had just fallen had stunned and benumbed him. He felt a natural repugnance to read this letter. But she had given him no choice. He read it. In reading it he felt a mortal sickness come over him, but he persevered ; he read it carefully to the end, and he was examining the signature keenly, when Miss Rolleston rejoined him, and, taking the letter from him, placed it in her bosom before his eyes.

"He loves me ; does he not ?" said she, wistfully.

Hazel looked half stupidly in her face for a moment ; then, with a candor which was part of his character, replied, doggedly, "Yes, the man who wrote that letter loves you."

"Then you can pity him, and I may venture to ask you the favor to— It will be a bitter grief and disappointment to him. Will you break it to him as gently as you can ; will you say that his Helen— Will you tell him what I have told you ?"

"I decline."

This point-blank refusal surprised Helen Rolleston; all the more that it was uttered with a certain sullenness, and even asperity, she had never seen till then in this gentle clergyman.

It made her fear she had done wrong in asking it; and she looked ashamed and distressed.

However, the explanation soon followed.

"My business," said he, "is to prolong your precious life; and making up your mind to die is not the way. You shall have no encouragement in such weakness from me. Pray let me be your physician."

"Thank you," said Helen, coldly; "I have my own physician."

"No doubt; but he shows me his incapacity, by allowing you to live on pastry and sweets; things that are utter poison to you. Disease of the lungs is curable, but not by drugs and unwholesome food."

"Mr. Hazel," said the lady, "we will drop the subject, if you please. It has taken an uninteresting turn."

"To you, perhaps; but not to me."

"Excuse me, sir; if you took that real friendly interest in me and my condition I was vain enough to think you might, you would hardly have refused me the first favor I ever asked you; and," drawing herself up proudly, "need I say the last?"

"You are unjust," said Hazel, sadly; "unjust beyond endurance. I refuse you any thing that is for your good? I, who would lay down my life with unmixed joy for you?"

"Mr. Hazel!" And she drew back from him with a haughty stare.

"Learn the truth why I can not, and will not, talk to Arthur Wardlaw about you. For one thing, he is my enemy, and I am his."

"His enemy? my Arthur's!"

"His mortal enemy. And I am going to England to clear an innocent man, and expose Arthur Wardlaw's guilt."

"Indeed," said Helen, with lofty contempt. "And pray what has he done to *you*?"

"He had a benefactor, a friend; he entrapped him into cashing a note of hand, which he must have known or suspected to be forged; then basely deserted him at the trial, and blasted his friend's life forever."

"Arthur Wardlaw did that?"

"He did; and that very James Seaton was his victim."

Her delicate nostrils were expanded with wrath, and her eyes flashed fire. "Mr. Hazel, you are a liar and a slanderer."

The man gave a kind of shudder, as if cold steel had passed through his heart. But his fortitude was great; he said doggedly, "Time will show. Time, and a jury of our countrymen."

"I will be his witness. I will say, this is malice of a rival. Yes, sir, you forget that you have let out the motive of this wicked slander. You love me yourself: Heaven forgive me for profaning the name of love!"

"Heaven forgive you for blaspheming the purest, fondest love that ever one creature laid at the feet of another. Yes, Helen Rolleston, I love you; and will save you from the grave and from the villain Wardlaw; both from one and the other."

"Oh," said Helen, clenching her teeth, "I hope

this is true: I hope you do love me, you wretch; then I may find a way to punish you for belying the absent, and stabbing me to the heart, through him."

Her throat swelled with a violent convulsion, and she could utter no more for a moment; and she put her white handkerchief to her lips, and drew it away discolored slightly with blood.

"Ah! you love me," she cried; "then know, for your comfort, that you have shortened my short life a day or two, by slandering *him* to my face, you monster. Look there at your love, and see what it has done for me."

She put the handkerchief under his eyes, with hate gleaming in her own.

Mr. Hazel turned ashy pale, and glared at it with horror; he could have seen his own shed, with stoical firmness; but a mortal sickness struck his heart at the sight of *her* blood. His hands rose and quivered in a peculiar way, his sight left him, and the strong man, but tender lover, staggered, and fell heavily on the deck in a dead swoon, and lay at her feet pale and motionless.

She uttered a scream, and sailors came running.

They lifted him, with rough sympathy; and Helen Rolleston retired to her cabin, panting with agitation. But she had little or no pity for the slanderer. She read Arthur Wardlaw's letter again, kissed it, wept over it, reproached herself for not having loved the writer enough; and vowed to repair that fault. "Poor slandered Arthur," said she; "from this hour I will love you as devotedly as you love me."

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER this, Helen Rolleston and Mr. Hazel never spoke. She walked past him on the deck with cold and haughty contempt.

He quietly submitted to it; and never presumed to say one word to her again. Only, as his determination was equal to his delicacy, Miss Rolleston found, one day, a paper on her table, containing advice as to the treatment of disordered lungs, expressed with apparent coldness, and backed by a string of medical authorities, quoted memoriter.

She sent this back directly, indorsed with a line, in pencil, that she would try hard to live, now she had a friend to protect from calumny; but should use her own judgment as to the means.

Yet women will be women. She had carefully taken a copy of his advice before she cast it out with scorn.

He replied, "Live with whatever motive you please; only live."

To this she vouchsafed no answer; nor did this unhappy man trouble her again, until an occasion of a very different kind arose.

One fine night he sat on the deck, with his back against the main-mast, in deep melancholy and listlessness, and fell, at last, into a doze, from which he was awakened by a peculiar sound below. It was a beautiful and still night; all sounds were magnified; and the father of all rats seemed to be gnawing the ship down below.

Hazel's curiosity was excited, and he went softly down the ladder to see what the sound

really was. But that was not so easy, for it proved to be below decks; but he saw a light glimmering through a small scuttle abaft the mate's cabin, and the sounds were in the neighborhood of that light.

It now flashed upon Mr. Hazel that this was the very quarter where he had heard that mysterious knocking when the ship was lying to in the gale.

Upon this a certain degree of vague suspicion began to mingle with his curiosity.

He stood still a moment, listening acutely; then took off his shoes very quietly, and moved with noiseless foot towards the scuttle.

The gnawing still continued.

He put his head through the scuttle and peered into a dark, dismal place, whose very existence was new to him. It was, in fact, a vacant space between the cargo and the ship's run. This wooden cavern was very narrow, but not less than fifteen feet long. The candle was at the farther end, and between it and Hazel a man was working, with his flank turned towards the spectator. This partly intercepted the light; but still it revealed in a fitful way the huge ribs of the ship, and her inner skin, that formed the right-hand partition, so to speak, of this black cavern; and close outside those gaunt timbers was heard the wash of the sea.

There was something solemn in the close proximity of that tremendous element and the narrowness of the wooden barrier.

The bare place, and the gentle, monotonous wash of the liquid monster, on that calm night, conveyed to Mr. Hazel's mind a thought akin to David's.

"As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death."

Judge whether that thought grew weaker or stronger, when, after straining his eyes for some time, to understand what was going on at that midnight hour, in that hidden place, he saw who was the workman, and what was his occupation.

It was Joseph Wylie, the mate. His profile was illuminated by the candle, and looked ghastly. He had in his hands an auger of enormous size, and with this he was drilling a great hole through the ship's side, just below the water-mark; an act, the effect of which would be to let the sea bodily into the ship and sink her, with every soul on board, to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

"I was stupefied; and my hairs stood on end, and my tongue clove to my jaws."

Thus does one of Virgil's characters describe the effect his mind produced upon his body, in a terrible situation.

Mr. Hazel had always ridiculed that trite line as a pure exaggeration; but he altered his opinion after that eventful night.

When he first saw what Wylie was doing, *obstupuit*, he was merely benumbed; but, as his mind realized the fiendish nature of the act, and its tremendous consequences, his hair actually bristled, and for a few minutes at least he could not utter a word.

In that interval of stupor, matters took another turn. The auger went in up to the haft; then Wylie caught up with his left hand a wooden plug he had got ready, jerked the auger away, caught up a hammer, and swiftly inserted the plug.

Rapid as he was, a single jet of water came squirting viciously in. But Wylie lost no time; he tapped the plug smartly with his hammer several times, and then, lifting a mallet with both hands, rained heavy blows on it that drove it in, and shook the ship's side.

Then Hazel found his voice, and he uttered an ejaculation that made the mate look round; he glared at the man who was glaring at him, and, staggering backward, trod on the light, and all was darkness and dead silence.

All but the wash of the sea outside, and that louder than ever.

But a short interval sufficed to restore one of the parties to his natural self-possession.

"Lord, sir," said Wylie, "how you startled me! You should not come upon a man at his work like that. We might have had an accident."

"What were you doing?" said Hazel, in a voice that quavered in spite of him.

"Repairing the ship. Found a crack or two in her inner skin. There, let me get a light, and I'll explain it to you, sir."

He groped his way out, and invited Mr. Hazel into his cabin. There he struck a light, and, with great civility, tendered an explanation. The ship, he said, had labored a good deal in the last gale, and he had discovered one or two flaws in her, which were of no immediate importance; but experience had taught him that in calm weather a ship ought to be kept tight.

"As they say ashore, a stitch in time saves nine."

"But drilling holes in her is not the way," said Hazel, sternly.

The mate laughed. "Why, sir," said he, "what other way is there? We can not stop an irregular crack; we can frame nothing to fit it. The way is to get ready a plug measured a trifle larger than the aperture you are going to make; then drill a round hole, and force in the plug. I know no other way than that; and I was a ship's carpenter for ten years before I was a mate."

This explanation, and the manner in which it was given, removed Mr. Hazel's apprehensions for the time being. "It was very alarming," said he; "but I suppose you know your business."

"Nobody better, sir," said Wylie. "Why, it is not one seaman in three that would trouble his head about a flaw in a ship's inner skin; but I'm a man that looks ahead. Will you have a glass of grog, sir, now you are here? I keep that under my eye, too; between ourselves, if the skipper has as much in his cabin as I have here, that might be worse for us all than a crack or two in the ship's inner skin."

Mr. Hazel declined to drink grog at that time in the morning, but wished him good-night, and left him with a better opinion of him than he had ever had till then.

Wylie, when he was gone, drew a tumbler of neat spirits, drank half, and carried the rest back to his work.

Yet Wylie was a very sober man in a general way. Rum was his tool; not his master.

When Hazel came to think of it all next day, he did not feel quite so easy as he had done. The inner skin! But, when Wylie withdrew his auger, the water had squirted in furiously.

He felt it hard to believe that this keen jet of water could be caused by a small quantity that had found its way between the skin of the ship and her copper, or her top booting; it seemed rather to be due to the direct pressure of the liquid monster outside.

He went to the captain that afternoon, and first told him what he had seen, offering no solution. The captain, on that occasion, was in an amphibious state; neither wet nor dry; and his reply was altogether exceptional. He received the communication with pompous civility; then swore a great oath, and said he would put the mate in irons: "Confound the lubber! he will be through the ship's bottom."

"But, stop a moment," said Mr. Hazel, "it is only fair you should also hear how he accounts for his proceeding."

The captain listened attentively to the explanation, and altered his tone. "Oh, that is a different matter," said he. "You need be under no alarm, sir; the thundering lubber knows what he is about, at that work. Why, he has been a ship's carpenter all his life. Him a seaman! If any thing ever happens to me, and Joe Wylie is set to navigate this ship, then you may say your prayers. He isn't fit to sail a wash-tub across a duck-pond. But I'll tell you what it is," added this worthy, with more pomposity than neatness of articulation, "here's respectable passenger brought me a report; do my duty to m' employers, and—take a look at the well."

He accordingly chalked a plumb-line, and went and sounded the well.

There were eight inches of water. Hudson told him that was no more than allships contained from various causes. "In fact," said he, "our pumps suck, and will not draw, at eight inches." Then suddenly grasping Mr. Hazel's hand, he said, in tearful accents, "Don't you trouble your head about Joe Wylie, or any other such scum. I'm skipper of the *Proserpine*, and a man that does his duty to 'z employers. Mr. Hazel, sir, I'd come to my last anchor in that well this moment, if my duty to m' employers required it. B—my eyes if I wouldn't lie down there this minute, and never move to all eternity and a day after, if it was my duty to m' employers!"

"No doubt," said Hazel, dryly. "But I think you can serve your employers better *in other parts of the ship*." He then left him, with a piece of advice; "to keep his eyes upon that Wylie."

Mr. Hazel kept his own eye on Wylie so constantly, that at eleven o'clock P.M. he saw that worthy go into the captain's cabin with a quart bottle of rum.

The coast was clear: the temptation great.

These men then were still deceiving him with a feigned antagonism. He listened at the key-hole, not without some compunction; which, however, became less and less as fragments of the dialogue reached his ear.

For a long time the only speaker was Hudson, and his discourse ran upon his own exploits at sea. But suddenly Wylie's voice broke in with an unmistakable tone of superiority.

"Belay all that chat, and listen to me. It is time we settled something. I'll hear what you have got to say; and then you'll *do* what I say. Better keep your hands off the bottle a minute;

you have had enough for the present; this is business. I know you are good for jaw; but what are you game to do for the governor's money? Any thing?"

"More than you have ever seen or heard tell of, ye lubber," replied the irritated skipper. "Who has ever served his employers like Hiram Hudson?"

"Keep that song for your quarter-deck," retorted the mate, contemptuously. "No, on second thoughts, just tell me how you have served your employers, you old humbug. Give me chapter and verse to choose from. Come now, the Neptune?"

"Well, the Neptune; she caught fire a hundred leagues from land."

"How came she to do that?"

"That is my business. Well, I put her head before the wind, and ran for the Azores; and I stuck to her, sir, till she was as black as a coal, and we couldn't stand on deck, but kept hopping like parched peas; and fire belching out of her port-holes forward: then we took to the boats, and saved a few bales of silk by way of sample of her cargo, and got ashore; and she'd have come ashore too next tide and told tales, but Somebody left a keg of gunpowder in the cabin, with a long fuse, and blew a hole in her old ribs, that the water came in, and down she went, hissing like ten thousand sarpints, and nobody the wiser."

"Who lighted the fuse, I wonder?" said Wylie.

"Didn't I tell ye it was 'Somebody?'" said Hudson. "Hand me the stiff." He replenished his glass, and, after taking a sip or two, asked Wylie if he had ever had the luck to be boarded by pirates.

"No," said Wylie. "Have you?"

"Ay; and they rescued me from a watery grave, as the lubbers call it. Ye see, I was employed by Downes and Co., down at the Havana, and cleared for Vera Cruz with some boxes of old worn-out printer's type."

"To print psalm-books for the darkies, no doubt," suggested Wylie.

"Insured as specie," continued Hudson, ignoring the interruption. "Well, just at day-break one morning, all of a sudden there was a rakish-looking craft on our weather-bow: lets fly a nine-pounder across our forefoot, and was alongside before my men could tumble up from below. I got knocked into the sea by the boom and fell between the ships; and the pirate he got hold of me and poured hot grog down my throat to bring me to my senses."

"That is not what you use it for in general," said Wylie. "Civil sort of pirate, though."

"Pirate be d—d. That was my consort rigged out with a black flag, and mounted with four nine-pounders on one side, and five dummies on the other. He blustered a bit, and swore, and took our type and our cabbages (I complained to Downes ashore about the vagabond taking the vegetables), and ordered us to leeward under all canvas, and we never saw him again,—not till he had shaved off his mustaches, and called on Downes to condole and say the varmint had chased his ship fifty leagues out of her course; but he had got clear of him. Downes complimented me publicly. Says he, 'This skipper boarded the pirate single-handed; only he jump-

ed short, and fell between the two ships; and here he is by a miracle.' Then he takes out his handkerchief, and flops his head on my shoulder. 'His merciful preservation almost reconciles me to the loss of my gold,' says the thundering crocodile. Cleared \$70,000, he did, out of the Marhatten Marine, and gave the pirate and me but £200 between us both."

"The Rose?" said Wylie.

"What a hurry you are in! Pass the grog. Well, the Rose; she lay off Ushant. We canted her to wash the decks; lucky she had a careful commander; not like Kempenfelt, whose eye was in his pocket, and his fingers held the pen, so he went to the bottom, with Lord knows how many men. I noticed the squalls came very sudden; so I sent most of my men ashore, and got the boats ready in case of accident. A squall did strike her, and she was on her beam-ends in a moment: we pulled ashore with two bales of silk by way of salvage, and sample of what warn't in her hold when she settled down. We landed, and the Frenchmen were dancing about with excitement. 'Captain,' says one, 'you have much sang fraw.' 'Insured, munseer,' says I. 'Bone,' says he.

"Then there was the Antelope, lost in charge of a pilot off the Hooghly. I knew the water as well as he did. We were on the port tack, standing towards the shoal. Weather it, as we should have done next tack, and I should have failed in my duty to my employers. Any thing but that! 'Look out!' said I. 'Pilot, she foreaches in stays.' Pilot was smoking; those sand-head pilots smoke in bed and asleep. He takes his cigar out of his mouth for one moment. 'Ready about,' says he. 'Hands 'bout ship. Helms a-lee. Raise tacks and sheets.' Round she was coming like a top. Pilot smoking. Just as he was going to haul the mainsel Somebody tripped against him, and shoved the hot cigar in his eye. He sung out and swore, and there was no mainsel haul. Ship in irons, tide running hard on to the shoal, and before we could clear away for anchoring, bump!—there she was hard and fast. A stiff breeze got up at sunrise, and she broke up. Next day I was sipping my grog and reading the Bengal Courier, and it told the disastrous wreck of the brig Antelope, wrecked in charge of a pilot: 'but no lives lost, and the owners fully insured.' Then there was the bark Sally. Why, you saw her yourself distressed on a lee shore."

"Yes," said Wylie. "I was in that tub, the Grampus, and we contrived to claw off the Scillies; yet you, in your smart Sally, got ashore. What luck!"

"Luck be blowed!" cried Hudson, angrily. "Somebody got into the chains to sound; and cut the weather halyards. Next tack the masts went over the side; and I had done my duty."

"Lives were lost that time, eh?" said Wylie, gravely.

"What is that to you?" replied Hudson, with the sudden ire of a drunken man. "Mind your own business. Pass me the bottle."

"Yes, lives was lost: and always will be lost in sea-going ships, where the skipper does his duty. There was a sight more lost at Trafalgar, owing to every man doing his duty. Lives lost, ye lubber? And why not mine? Because their time was come, and mine wasn't. For I'll tell

you one thing, Joe Wylie,—if she takes fire and runs before the wind till she is as black as a coal, and belching flame through all her port-holes, and then explodes, and goes aloft in ten thousand pieces no bigger than *my* hat, or *your* knowledge of navigation, Hudson is the last man to leave her: Duty!—If she goes on her beam-ends and founders, Hudson sees the last of her, and reports it to his employers: Duty!—If she goes grinding on Scilly, Hudson is the last man to leave her bones: Duty!—Some day perhaps I shall be swamped myself along with the craft: I have escaped till now, *owing to not being insured*; but if ever my time should come, and you should get clear, promise me, Joe, to see the owners, and tell 'em Hudson did his duty."

Here a few tears quenched his noble ardor for a moment. But he soon recovered, and said with some little heat, "You have got the bottle again. I never saw such a fellow to get hold of the bottle. Come, here's 'Duty to our employers!' And now I'll tell you how we managed with the Carysbrook and the Amelia."

This promise was followed by fresh narratives; in particular, of a vessel he had run upon the Florida reef at night, where wreckers had been retained in advance to look out for signals, and come on board and quarrel on pretense and set fire to the vessel, insured at thrice her value.

Hudson got quite excited with the memory of these exploits, and told each successive feat louder and louder.

But now it was Wylie's turn. "Well," said he, very gravely, "all this was child's play."

There was a pause that marked Hudson's astonishment. Then he broke out, "Child's play, ye lubber! If you had been there your gills would have been as white as your Sunday shirt; and a d—d deal whiter."

"Come, be civil," said Wylie; "I tell you, all the ways you have told me are too suspicious. Our governor is a high-flier: he pays like a prince, and, in return, he must not be blown on, if it is ever so little. 'Wylie,' says he, 'a breath of suspicion would kill me.' 'Make it so much,' says I, 'and that breath shall never blow on you.' No, no, skipper; none of those ways will do for us; they have all been worked twice too often. It must be done in fair weather, and in a way—Fill your glass and I'll fill mine—Capital rum this. You talk of my gills turning white; before long we shall see whose keeps their color best, mine or yours, my boy."

There was a silence, during which Hudson was probably asking himself what Wylie meant; for presently he broke out in a loud, but somewhat quivering voice: Why, you mad, drunken devil of a ship's carpenter, red-hot from hell, I see what you are at, now; you are going—

"Hush!" cried Wylie, alarmed in his turn. "Is this the sort of thing to bellow out for the watch to hear? Whisper, now."

This was followed by the earnest mutterings of two voices. In vain did the listener send his very soul into his ear to hear. He could catch no single word. Yet he could tell, by the very tones of the speakers, that the dialogue was one of mystery and importance.

Here was a situation at once irritating and alarming; but there was no help for it. The best thing, now, seemed to be to withdraw unobserved, and wait for another opportunity. He

did so; and he had not long retired, when the mate came out staggering, and flushed with liquor, and that was a thing that had never occurred before. He left the cabin door open, and went into his own room.

Soon after sounds issued from the cabin,—peculiar sounds, something between grunting and snoring.

Mr. Hazel came and entered the cabin. There he found the captain of the *Proserpine* in a position very unfavorable to longevity. His legs were crooked over the seat of his chair, and his head was on the ground. His handkerchief was tight round his neck, and the man himself dead drunk, and purple in the face.

Mr. Hazel instantly undid his stock, on which the gallant seaman muttered inarticulately. He then took his feet off the chair, and laid them on the ground, and put the empty bottle under the animal's neck.

But he had no sooner done all this, than he had a serious misgiving. Would not this man's death have been a blessing? Might not his life prove fatal?

The thought infuriated him, and he gave the prostrate figure a heavy kick that almost turned it over, and the words, "Duty to employers," gurgled out of its mouth directly.

It really seemed as if these sounds were independent of the mind, and resided at the tip of Hudson's tongue: so that a thorough good kick could, at any time, shake them out of his inanimate body.

Thus do things ludicrous and things terrible mingle in the real world; only to those who are in the arena, the ludicrous passes unnoticed, being overshadowed by its terrible neighbor.

And so it was with Hazel. He saw nothing absurd in all this; and in that prostrate, insensible hog, commanding the ship, forsooth, and carrying all their lives in his hands, he saw the mysterious and alarming only, saw them so, and felt them, that he lay awake all night thinking what he should do, and early next day he went into the mate's cabin, and said to him: "Mr. Wylie, in any other ship I should speak to the captain, and not to the mate; but here that would be no use, for you are the master, and he is your servant."

"Don't tell him so, sir, for he doesn't think small beer of himself."

"I shall waste no more words on him. It is to you I speak, and you know I speak the truth. Here is a ship, in which, for certain reasons known to yourself, the captain is under the mate."

"Well, sir," said Wylie, good-humoredly, "it is no use trying to deceive a gentleman like you. Our skipper is an excellent seaman, but he has got a fault." Then Wylie imitated, with his hand, the action of a person filling his glass.

"And you are here to keep him sober, eh?"

Wylie nodded.

"Then why do you ply him with liquor?"

"I don't, sir."

"You do. I have seen you do it a dozen times: and last night you took rum into his room, and made him so drunk, he would have died where he lay if I had not loosened his handkerchief."

"I am sorry to hear that, sir; but he was so-

ber when I left him. The fool must have got to the bottle the moment I was gone."

"But that bottle you put in his way; I saw you: and what was your object? To deaden his conscience with liquor, his and your own, while you made him your fiendish proposal. Man, man, do you believe in God, and in a judgment to come for the deeds done in the body, that you can plan in cold blood to destroy a vessel with nineteen souls on board, besides the live stock, the innocent animals that God pitied and spared when he raised his hand in wrath over Nineveh of old?"

While the clergyman was speaking, with flashing eyes and commanding voice, the seaman turned ashy pale, and drew his shoulders together like a cat preparing to defend her life.

"I plan to destroy a vessel, sir! You never heard me say such a word; and don't you hint such a thing in the ship, or you will get yourself into trouble."

"That depends on you."

"How so, sir?"

"I have long suspected you."

"You need not tell me that, sir."

"But I have not communicated my suspicions. And now that they are certainties, I come first to you. In one word, will you forego your intention, since it is found out?"

"How can I forego what never was in my head?" said Wylie. "Cast away the ship! Why, there's no land within two thousand miles. Founders a vessel in the Pacific! Do you think my life is not as sweet to me as yours is to you?"

Wylie eyed him keenly to see the effect of these words, and, by a puzzled expression that came over his face, saw at once he had assumed a more exact knowledge than he really possessed.

Hazel replied that he had said nothing about foundering the ship; but there were many ways of destroying one. "For instance," said he, "I know how the *Neptune* was destroyed,—and so do you: how the *Rose* and the *Antelope* were cast away,—and so do you."

At this enumeration, Wylie lost his color and self-possession for a moment; he saw Hazel had been listening. Hazel followed up his blow. "Promise me now, by all you hold sacred, to forego this villainy, and I hold my tongue. Attempt to defy me, or to throw dust in my eyes, and I go instantly among the crew, and denounce both you and Hudson to them."

"Good heavens!" cried Wylie, in unfeigned terror. "Why, the men would mutiny on the spot."

"I can't help that," said Hazel firmly; and took a step towards the door.

"Stop a bit," said the mate. "Don't be in such a nation hurry: for, if you do, it will be bad for me, but worse for you." The above was said so gravely, and with such evident sincerity, that Mr. Hazel was struck, and showed it. Wylie followed up that trifling advantage. "Sit down a minute, sir, if you please, and listen to me. You never saw a mutiny on board ship, I'll be bound. It is a worse thing than any gale that ever blew: begins fair enough, sometimes; but how does it end? In breaking into the spirit-room, and drinking to madness, plundering the ship, ravishing the women, and cutting a throat or so for certain. You don't seem so fond of the picture as you was of the idea. And then they

might turn a deaf ear to you after all. Ship is well found in all stores; provisions served out freely; men in good humor; and I have got their ear. And now I'll tell you why it won't suit your little game to blacken me to the crew, upon the bare chance of a mutiny." He paused for a moment, then resumed in a lower tone, and revealed himself the extraordinary man he was.

"You see, sir," said he, "when a man is very ready to suspect me, I always suspect him. Now you was uncommon ready to suspect me. You didn't wait till you came on board; you began the game ashore. Oh, what, that makes you open one eye, does it? You thought I didn't know you again. Knew you, my man, the moment you came aboard. I never forget a face; and disguises don't pass on me."

It was now Hazel's turn to look anxious and discomposed.

"So, then, the moment I saw you suspected me I was down upon you. Well, you come aboard under false colors. We didn't want a chap like you in the ship; but you would come. 'What is the bloke after?' says I, and watches. You was so intent suspecting me of this, that, and t'other, that you unguarded yourself, and that is common too. I'm blowed if it isn't the lady you are after. With all my heart: only she might do better, and I don't see how she could do worse, unless she went to Old Nick for a mate. Now, I'll tell you what it is, my man. I've been in trouble myself, and don't want to be hard on a poor devil, just because he sails under an alias, and lies as near the wind as he can, to weather on the beaks and the bobbies. But one good turn deserves another: keep your dirty suspicions to yourself; for if you dare to open your lips to the men, in five minutes, or less than that, you shall be in irons, and confined to your cabin; and we'll put you ashore at the first port that flies the British flag, and hand you over to the authorities, till one of her Majesty's cruisers sends in a boat for you."

At this threat Mr. Hazel hung his head in confusion and dismay.

"Come, get out of my cabin, Parson Alias," shouted the mate; "and belay your foul tongue in this ship, and don't make an enemy of Joe Wylie, a man that will eat you up else, and spit you out again, and never brag. Sheer off, I say, and be d—d to you."

Mr. Hazel, with a pale face and sick heart, looked aghast at this dangerous man, who could be fox or tiger, as the occasion demanded.

Surprised, alarmed, outwitted, and out-maneuvred, he retired with disordered countenance and uneven steps, and hid himself in his own cabin.

The more he weighed the whole situation, the more clearly did he see that he was utterly powerless in the hands of Wylie.

A skipper is an emperor; and Hudson had the power to iron him, and set him on shore at the nearest port. The right to do it was another matter; but even on that head Wylie could furnish a plausible excuse for the act. Retribution, if it came at all, would not be severe, and would be three or four years coming: and who fears it much, when it is so dilatory, and so weak, and so doubtful into the bargain?

He succumbed in silence for two days; and then, in spite of Wylie's threat, he made one timid attempt to approach the subject with

Welch and Cooper, but a sailor came up instantly, and sent them forward to reef topsails. And, whenever he tried to enter into conversation with the pair, some sailor or other was sure to come up and listen.

Then he saw that he was spotted; or, as we say nowadays, picketed.

He was at his wits' end.

He tried his last throw. He wrote a few lines to Miss Rolleston, requesting an interview. Aware of the difficulties he had to encounter here, he stilled his heart by main force, and wrote in terms carefully measured. He begged her to believe he had no design to intrude upon her, without absolute necessity, and for her own good. Respect for her own wishes forbade this, and also his self-respect.

"But," said he, "I have made a terrible discovery. The mate and the captain certainly intend to cast away this ship. No doubt they will try and not sacrifice their own lives and ours; but risk them they must, in the very nature of things. Before troubling you, I have tried all I could, in the way of persuasion and menace; but am defeated. So now it rests with you. You, alone, can save us all. I will tell you how, if you will restrain your repugnance, and accord me a short interview. Need I say that no other subject shall be introduced by me? In England, should we ever reach it, I may perhaps try to take measures to regain your good opinion; but here, I am aware, that is impossible; and I shall make no attempt in that direction, upon my honor."

To this came a prompt and feminine reply:—

"The ship is *his*. The captain and mate are able men, appointed by *him*. Your suspicions of these poor men are calumnies, and of a piece with your other monstrous slanders.

"I really must insist on your holding no further communications of any sort with one to whom your character is revealed and odious.

"H. R."

This letter benumbed his heart at first. A letter? It was a blow; a blow from her he loved, and she hated him!

His long-suffering love gave way at last. What folly and cruelty combined! He could no longer make allowances for the spite of a woman whose lover had been truded. Rage and despair seized him; he bit his nails, and tore his hair with fury; and prayed Heaven to help him hate her as she deserved, "the blind, insolent idiot!" Yes, these bitter words actually came out of his mouth, in a torrent of fury.

But to note down all he said in his rage, would be useless; and might mislead, for this was a gust of fury; and, while it lasted, the long-suffering man was no longer himself.

As a proof how little this state of mind was natural to him, it stirred up all the bile in his body, and brought on a severe attack of yellow jaundice, accompanied by the settled dejection that marks that disorder.

Meantime the Proserpine glided on, with a fair wind, and a contented crew. She was well found in stores; and they were served out ungrudgingly.

Every face on board beamed with jollity, except poor Hazel's. He crept about, yellow as a guinea; a very scarecrow.

The surgeon, a humane man, urged him to drink sherry, and take strong exercise.

But persons afflicted with that distressing malady are obstinately set against those things which tend to cure it; this is a feature of the disease. Mr. Hazel was no exception. And then his heart had received so many blows, it had no power left to resist the depressing effect of his disorder. He took no exercise; he ate little food. He lay, listless and dejected, about the deck, and let disease do what it pleased with him.

The surgeon shook his head, and told Hudson the parson was booked.

"And good riddance of bad rubbish!" was that worthy's gracious comment.

The ship now encountered an adverse gale, and, for three whole days, was under close-reefed topsails; she was always a wet ship under stress of weather; and she took in a good deal of water on this occasion. On the fourth day it fell calm, and Captain Hudson, having examined the well, and found three feet of water, ordered the men to the pumps.

After working through one watch, the well was sounded again, and the water was so much reduced that the gangs were taken off; and the ship being now becalmed, and the weather lovely, the men were allowed to dance upon deck to the boatswain's fiddle.

While this pastime went on, the sun, large and red, reached the horizon, and diffused a roseate light over the entire ocean.

Not one of the current descriptions of heaven approached the actual grandeur and beauty of the blue sky, flecked with ruby and gold, and its liquid mirror that lay below, calm, dimpled, and glorified by that translucent, rosy tint.

While the eye was yet charmed with this enchanting bridal of the sea and sky, and the ear amused with the merry fiddle and the nimble feet, that tapped the sounding deck so deftly at every note, Cooper, who had been sounding the well, ran forward all of a sudden, and flung a thunderbolt in the midst.

"A LEAK!"

CHAPTER X.

THE fiddle ended in mid-tune, and the men crowded aft with anxious faces.

The captain sounded the well, and found three feet and a half water in it. He ordered all hands to the pumps.

They turned to with a good heart, and pumped, watch and watch, till daybreak.

Their exertions counteracted the leak, but did no more; the water in the well was neither more nor less, perceptibly.

This was a relief to their minds, so far; but the situation was a very serious one. Suppose foul weather should come, and the vessel ship water from above as well!

Now all those who were not on the pumps set to work to find out the leak and stop it if possible. With candles in their hands, they crept about the ribs of the ship, narrowly inspecting every corner, and applying their ears to every suspected place, if haply they might hear the water coming in. The place where Hazel had found Wylie at work was examined, along with the rest; but neither there nor anywhere else

could the leak be discovered. Yet the water was still coming in, and required unremitting labor to keep it under. It was then suggested by Wylie, and the opinion gradually gained ground, that some of the seams had opened in the late gale, and were letting in the water by small but numerous apertures.

Faces began to look cloudy; and Hazel, throwing off his lethargy, took his spell at the main pump with the rest.

When his gang was relieved he went away, bathed in perspiration, and, leaning over the well, sounded it.

While thus employed, the mate came behind him, with his cat-like step, and said, "See what has come on us by your forebodings! It is the unluckiest thing in the world to talk about losing a ship when she is at sea."

"You are a more dangerous man on board a ship than I am," was Hazel's prompt reply.

The well gave an increase of three inches.

Mr. Hazel now showed excellent qualities. He worked like a horse; and, finding the mate skulking, he reproached him before the men, and, stripping himself naked to the waist, invited him to do a man's duty. The mate thus challenged, complied with a scowl.

They labored for their lives, and the quantity of water they discharged from the ship was astonishing; not less than a hundred and ten tons every hour.

They gained upon the leak—only two inches, but, in the struggle for life, this was an immense victory. It was the turn of the tide.

A slight breeze sprung up from the south-west, and the captain ordered the men from the buckets to make all sail on the ship, the pumps still going.

When this was done, he altered the ship's course, and put her right before the wind, steering for the island of Juan Fernandez, distant eleven hundred miles or thereabouts.

Probably it was the best thing he could do, in that awful waste of water. But its effect on the seamen was bad. It was like giving in. They got a little disheartened and flurried; and the cold, passionless water seized the advantage. It is possible, too, that the motion of the ship through the sea aided the leak.

The Proserpine glided through the water all night, like some terror-stricken creature, and the incessant pumps seemed to be her poor heart, beating loud with breathless fear.

At daybreak she had gone a hundred and twenty miles. But this was balanced by a new and alarming feature. The water from the pumps no longer came up pure, but mixed with what appeared to be blood.

This got redder and redder, and struck terror into the more superstitious of the crew.

Even Cooper, whose heart was stout, leaned over the bulwarks, and eyed the red stream, gushing into the sea from the lee scuppers, and said aloud, "Ay, bleed to death, ye bitch. We sha'n't be long behind ye."

Hazel inquired, and found the ship had a quantity of dye-wood among her cargo: he told the men this, and tried to keep up their hearts by his words and his example.

He succeeded with some; but others shook their heads. And by-and-by even while he was working double tides for them as well as for him-

self, ominous murmurs met his ear. "Parson aboard!" "Man aboard with t'other world in his face!" And there were sinister glances to match.

He told this with some alarm to Welch and Cooper. They promised to stand by him; and Welch told him it was all the mate's doings; he had gone among the men and poisoned them.

The wounded vessel, with her ever-beating heart, had run three hundred miles on the new track. She had almost ceased to bleed; but what was as bad, or worse, small fragments of her cargo and stores came up with the water, and their miscellaneous character showed how deeply the sea had now penetrated.

This, and their great fatigue, began to demoralize the sailors. The pumps and buckets were still plied, but it was no longer with the uniform manner of brave and hopeful men. Some stuck doggedly to their work, but others got flurried, and ran from one thing to another. Now and then a man would stop, and burst out crying; then to work again in a desperate way. One or two lost heart altogether, and had to be driven. Finally, one or two succumbed under the unrelenting labor. Despair crept over others: their features began to change, so much so that several countenances were hardly recognizable, and each looking in the other's troubled face, saw his own fate pictured there.

Six feet water in the hold!

The captain, who had been sober beyond his time, now got dead drunk.

The mate took the command. On hearing this, Welch and Cooper left the pumps. Wylie ordered them back. They refused, and coolly lighted their pipes. A violent altercation took place, which was brought to a close by Welch.

"It is no use pumping the ship," said he. "She is doomed. D'ye think we are blind, my mate and me? You got the long-boat ready for yourself before ever the leak was sprung. Now get the cutter ready for my mate and me."

At these simple words Wylie lost color, and walked aft without a word.

Next day there were seven feet water in the hold, and quantities of bread coming up through the pumps.

Wylie ordered the men from the pumps to the boats. The jolly-boat was provisioned and lowered. While she was towing astern the cutter was prepared, and the ship left to fill.

All this time Miss Rolleston had been kept in the dark, not as to the danger, but as to its extent. Great was her surprise when Mr. Hazel entered her cabin, and cast an ineffable look of pity on her.

She looked up surprised, and then angry. "How dare you?" she began.

He waved his hand in a sorrowful but commanding way. "Oh, this is no time for prejudice or temper. The ship is sinking: we are going into the boats. Pray make preparations. Here is a list I have written of the things you ought to take: we may be weeks at sea in an open boat."

Then, seeing her dumfounded, he caught up her carpet-bag, and threw her work-box into it for a beginning. He then laid hands upon some of her preserved meats and marmalade, and carried them off to his own cabin.

His mind then flew back to his reading, and

passed in rapid review all the wants that men had endured in open boats.

He got hold of Welch, and told him to be sure and see there was plenty of spare canvas on board, and sailing needles, scissors, etc.: also three bags of biscuit, and, above all, a cask of water.

He himself ran all about the ship, including the mate's cabin, in search of certain tools he thought would be wanted.

Then to his own cabin, to fill his carpet-bag. There was little time to spare; the ship was low in the water and the men abandoning her. He flung the things into his bag, fastened and locked it, strapped up his blankets for her use, flung on his pea-jacket, and turned the handle of his door to run out.

The door did not open!

He pushed it. It did not yield!

He rushed at it. It was fast!

He uttered a cry of rage, and flung himself at it.

Horror! It was immovable!

CHAPTER XI.

THE fearful, the sickening truth burst on him in all its awful significance.

Some miscreant or madman had locked the door, and so fastened him to the sinking ship, at a time when, in the bustle, the alarm, the selfishness, all would be apt to forget him, and leave him to his death.

He tried the door in every way, he hammered at it; he shouted, he raged, he screamed. In vain. Unfortunately the door of this cabin was of very unusual strength and thickness.

Then he took up one of those great augers he had found in the mate's cabin, and bored a hole in the door; through this hole he fired his pistol, and then screamed for help. "I am shut up in the cabin. I shall be drowned. Oh, for Christ's sake save me! save me!" and a cold sweat of terror poured down his whole body.

What is that?

The soft rustle of a woman's dress.

Oh, how he thanked God for that music, and the hope it gave him!

It comes towards him; it stops, the key is turned, the dress rustles away, swift as a winged bird; he dashes at the door; it flies open.

Nobody was near. He recovered his courage in part, fetched out his bag and his tools, and ran across to the starboard side. There he found the captain lowering Miss Rolleston, with due care, into the cutter, and the young lady crying; not at being shipwrecked, if you please, but at being deserted by her maid. Jane Holt, at this trying moment, had deserted her mistress for her husband. This was natural; but, as is the rule with persons of that class, she had done this in the silliest and cruellest way. Had she given half an hour's notice of her intention, Donovan might have been on board the cutter with her and her mistress. But no; being a liar and a fool, she must hide her husband to the last moment, and then desert her mistress. The captain, then, was comforting Miss Rolleston, and telling her she should have her maid with her eventually, when Hazel came. He handed down

his own bag, and threw the blankets into the stern-sheets. Then went down himself, and sat on the midship-thwart.

"Shove off," said the captain; and they fell astern.

But Cooper, with a boat-hook, hooked on to the long-boat; and the dying ship towed them both.

Five minutes more elapsed, and the captain did not come down, so Wylie hailed him.

There was no answer. Hudson had gone into the mate's cabin. Wylie waited a minute, then hailed again. "Hy! on deck there!"

"Hullo!" cried the captain, at last.

"Why didn't you come in the cutter?"

The captain crossed his arms, and leaned over the stern.

"Don't you know that Hiram Hudson is always the last to leave a sinking ship?"

"Well, you *are* the last," said Wylie. "So now come on board the long-boat at once. I dare not tow in her wake much longer, to be sucked in when she goes down."

"Come on board your craft and desert my own?" said Hudson, disdainfully. "Know my duty to m' employers better."

These words alarmed the mate. "Curse it all!" he cried; "the fool has been and got some more rum. Fifty guineas to the man that will shin up the tow-rope, and throw that madman into the sea; then we can pick him up. He swims like a cork."

A sailor instantly darted forward to the rope. But, unfortunately, Hudson heard this proposal, and it enraged him. He got to his cutlass. The sailor drew the boat under the ship's stern, but the drunken skipper flourished his cutlass furiously over his head. "Board me! ye pirates! the first that lays a finger on my bulwarks, off goes his hand at the wrist." Suiting the action to the word, he hacked at the tow-rope so vigorously that it gave way, and the boats fell astern.

Helen Rolleston uttered a shriek of dismay and pity. "Oh, save him!" she cried.

"Make sail!" cried Cooper; and, in a few seconds, they got all her canvas set upon the cutter.

It seemed a hopeless chase for these shells to sail after that dying monster with her cloud of canvas all drawing, aloof and aloft.

"But it did not prove so. The gentle breeze was an advantage to light craft, and the dying Proserpine was full of water, and could only crawl.

After a few moments of great anxiety, the boats crept up, the cutter on her port, and the long-boat on her starboard quarter.

Wylie ran forward, and, hailing Hudson, implored him, in the friendliest tones, to give himself a chance. Then tried him by his vanity, "Come and command the boats, old fellow. How can we navigate them on the Pacific without you?"

Hudson was now leaning over the taffrail utterly drunk. He made no reply to the mate, but merely waved his cutlass feebly in one hand, and his bottle in the other, and gurgled out, "Duty to m' employers."

Then Cooper, without a word, double-reefed the cutter's mainsail, and told Welch to keep as close to the ship's quarter as he dare. Wylie instinctively did the same, and the three craft

crawled on in solemn and deadly silence for nearly twenty minutes.

The wounded ship seemed to receive a death-blow. She stopped dead, and shook.

The next moment she pitched gently forward, and her bows went under the water, while her after-part rose into the air, and revealed to those in the cutter two splintered holes in her run just below the water-line.

The next moment her stern settled down; the sea yawned horribly, the great waves of her own making rushed over her upper deck, and the lofty masts and sails, remaining erect, went down with sad majesty into the deep: and nothing remained but the bubbling and foaming of the voracious water, that had swallowed up the good ship and her cargo, and her drunken master.

All stood up in the boats, ready to save him. But either his cutlass sunk him, or the suction of so great a body drew him down. He was seen no more in this world.

A loud sigh broke from every living bosom that witnessed that terrible catastrophe.

It was beyond words; and none were uttered, except by Cooper, who spoke so seldom; yet now three words of terrible import burst from him, and, uttered in his loud, deep voice, rang like the sunk ship's knell over the still bubbling water—

"SCUTTLED—BY GOD!"

CHAPTER XII.

"Hold your tongue," said Welch, with an oath.

Mr. Hazel looked at Miss Rolleston, and she at him. It was a momentary glance, and her eyes sank directly, and filled with patient fears.

For the first few minutes after the Proserpine went down, the survivors sat benumbed, as if awaiting their turn to be ingulfed.

They seemed so little, and the Proserpine so big; yet she was swallowed before their eyes, like a crumb. They lost, for a few moments, all idea of escaping.

But, true it is, that, "while there's life there's hope;" and, as soon as their hearts began to beat again, their eyes roved round the horizon, and their elastic minds recoiled against despair.

This was rendered easier by the wonderful beauty of the weather. There were men there who had got down from a sinking ship, into boats heaving and tossing against her side in a gale of wind, and yet been saved: and here all was calm and delightful. To be sure, in those other shipwrecks land had been near, and their greatest peril was over when once the boats got clear of the distressed ship without capsizing. Here was no immediate peril; but certain death menaced them at an uncertain distance.

Their situation was briefly this. Should it come on to blow a gale, these open boats, small and loaded, could not hope to live. Therefore they had two chances for life, and no more: they must either make land—or be picked up at sea—before the weather changed.

But how? The nearest known land was the group of islands called Juan Fernandez, and they lay somewhere to leeward; but distant at least nine hundred miles; and should they pre-

for the other chance, then they must beat three hundred miles and more to windward; for Hudson underrating the leak, as is supposed, had run the Proserpine fully that distance out of the track of trade.

Now the ocean is a highway—in law; but, in fact, it contains a few highways, and millions of byways; and, once a cockle-shell gets into those byways, small indeed is its chance of being seen and picked up by any sea-going vessel.

Wylie, who was leading, lowered his sail, and hesitated between the two courses we have indicated. However, on the cutter coming up with him, he ordered Cooper to keep her head north-east, and so run all night. He then made all the sail he could in the same direction, and soon out-sailed the cutter. When the sun went down, he was about a mile ahead of her.

Just before sunset, Mr. Hazel made a discovery that annoyed him very much. He found that Welch had put only one bag of biscuit, a ham, a keg of spirits, and a small barrel of water, on board the cutter.

He remonstrated with him sharply. Welch replied that it was all right; the cutter being small, he had put the rest of her provisions on board the long-boat.

"On board the long-boat!" said Hazel, with a look of wonder. "You have actually made our lives depend upon that scoundrel Wylie again. You deserve to be flung into the sea. You have no forethought yourself; yet you will not be guided by those that have it."

Welch hung his head a little at these reproaches. However, he replied, rather sullenly, that it was only for one night; they could signal the long-boat in the morning, and get the other bags, and the cask, out of her. But Mr. Hazel was not to be appeased. "The morning! Why, she sails three feet to our two. How do you know he won't run away from us? I never expect to get within ten miles of him again. We know him; and he knows we know him."

Cooper got up, and patted Mr. Hazel on the shoulder, soothingly. "Boat-hook aft," said he to Welch.

He then, by an ingenious use of the boat-hook and some of the spare canvas, contrived to set out a studding-sail on the other side of the mast.

Hazel thanked him warmly. "But oh, Cooper! Cooper!" said he, "I'd give all I had in the world if that bread and water were on board the cutter instead of the long-boat."

The cutter had now two wings, instead of one; the water bubbling loud under her bows marked her increased speed; and all fear of being greatly out-sailed by her consort began to subside.

A slight sea-fret came on, and obscured the sea in part; but they had a good lantern and compass, and steered the course exactly, all night, according to Wylie's orders, changing the helmsman every four hours.

Mr. Hazel, without a word, put a rug round Miss Rolleston's shoulders, and another round her feet.

"Oh, not both, sir, please," said she.

"Am I to be disobeyed by every body?" said he.

Then she submitted in silence, and in a certain obsequious way that was quite new, and well calculated to disarm anger.

Sooner or later, all slept, except the helmsman.

At daybreak, Mr. Hazel was awakened by a loud hail from a man in the bows.

All the sleepers started up.

"Long-boat not in sight!"

It was too true. The ocean was blank; not a sail, large or small, in sight.

Many voices spoke at once.

"He has carried on till he has capsized her."

"He has given us the slip."

Unwilling to believe so great a calamity, every eye peered and stared all over the sea. In vain. Not a streak that could be a boat's hull, not a speck that could be a sail.

The little cutter was alone upon the ocean. Alone, with scarcely two days' provisions, nine hundred miles from land, and four hundred miles to leeward of the nearest sea-road.

Hazel, seeing his worst forebodings realized, sat down in moody, bitter, and boding silence.

Of the other men some raged and cursed. Some wept aloud.

The lady, more patient, put her hands together, and prayed to Him who made the sea and all that therein is. Yet her case was the cruellest. For she was by nature more timid than the men, yet she must share their desperate peril. And then to be alone with all these men, and one of them had told her he loved her, and hated the man she was betrothed to! Shame tortured this delicate creature, as well as fear. Happy for her, that of late, and only of late, she had learned to pray in earnest. "*Qui precari novit, premi potest, non potest opprimi.*"

It was now a race between starvation and drowning, and either way death stared them in the face.

CHAPTER XIII.

The long-boat was, at this moment, a hundred miles to windward of the cutter.

The fact is, that Wylie, the evening before, had been secretly perplexed as to the best course. He had decided to run for the island; but he was not easy under his own decision; and at night he got more and more discontented with it. Finally, at nine o'clock, p.m., he suddenly gave the order to luff, and tack: and by daybreak he was very near the place where the Proserpine went down: whereas the cutter, having run before the wind all night was, at least, a hundred miles to leeward of him.

Not to deceive the reader, or let him, for a moment, think we do business in monsters, we will weigh this act of Wylie's justly.

It was just a piece of iron egotism. He preferred, for himself, the chance of being picked up by a vessel. He thought it was about a hair's breadth better than running for an island, as to whose bearing he was not very clear, after all.

But he was not *sure* he was taking the best or safest course. The cutter might be saved, after all, and the long-boat lost.

Meantime he was not sorry of an excuse to shake off the cutter. She contained one man at least who knew he had scuttled the Proserpine; and therefore it was all-important to him to get to London before her, and receive the three

thousand pounds which was to be his reward for that abominable act.

But the way to get to London before Mr. Hazel, or else to the bottom of the Pacific before him, was to get back into the sea-road, at all hazards.

He was not aware that the cutter's water and biscuit were on board his boat; nor did he discover this till noon next day. And, on making this fearful discovery, he showed himself human; he cried out, with an oath, "What have I done? I have damned myself to all eternity!"

He then ordered the boat to be put before the wind again; but the men scowled, and not one stirred a finger; and he saw the futility of this, and did not persist; but groaned aloud; and then sat, staring wildly; finally, like a true sailor, he got to the rum, and stupefied his agitated conscience for a time.

While he lay drunk at the bottom of the boat, his sailors carried out his last instructions, beating southward right in the wind's eye.

Five days they beat to windward, and never saw a sail. Then it fell a dead calm; and so remained for three days more.

The men began to suffer greatly from cramps, owing to their number and confined position. During the calm, they rowed all day, and with this, and a light westerly breeze that sprang up, they got into the sea-road again: but, having now sailed three hundred and fifty miles to the southward, they found a great change in the temperature: the nights were so cold that they were fain to huddle together, to keep a little warmth in their bodies.

On the fifteenth day of their voyage it began to rain and blow, and then they were never a whole minute out of peril. Hand forever on the sheet, eye on the waves, to ease her at the right moment: and, with all this care, the spray eternally flying half-way over her mast, and often a body of water making a clean breach over her, and the men bailing night and day with their very hats, or she could not have lived an hour.

At last, when they were almost dead with wet, cold, fatigue, and danger, a vessel came in sight, and crept slowly up, about two miles to windward of the distressed boat. With the heave of the waters they could see little more than her sails; but they ran up a bright bandanna handkerchief to their mast-head; and the ship made them out. She hoisted Dutch colors, and—continued her course.

Then the poor abandoned creatures wept, and raved, and cursed, in their frenzy, glaring after that cruel, shameless man, who could do such an act, yet hoist a color, and show of what nation he was the native—and the disgrace.

But one of them said not a word. This was Wylie. He sat shivering, and remembered how he had abandoned the cutter, and all on board. Loud sighs broke from his laboring breast; but not a word. Yet one word was ever present to his mind; and seemed written in fire on the night of clouds, and howled in his ears by the wind,—Retribution!

And now came a dirty night—to men on ships; a fearful night to men in boats. The sky black, the sea on fire with crested billows, that broke over them every minute; their light was washed out; their provisions drenched and

spoiled; bail as they would, the boat was always filling. Up to their knees in water; cold as ice, blinded with spray, deafened with roaring billows, they tossed and tumbled in a fiery foaming hell of waters, and still, though despairing, clung to their lives, and bailed with their hats unceasingly.

Day broke, and the first sight it revealed to them was a brig to windward staggering along, and pitching under close-reefed topsails.

They started up, and waved their hats, and cried aloud. But the wind carried their voices to leeward, and the brig staggered on.

They ran up their little signal of distress; but still the ship staggered on.

Then the miserable men shook hands all round, and gave themselves up for lost.

But at this moment the brig hoisted a vivid flag all stripes and stars, and altered her course a point or two.

She crossed the boat's track a mile ahead, and her people looked over the bulwarks, and waved their hats to encourage those tossed and desperate men.

Having thus given them the weather-gage, the brig hove to for them.

They ran down to her, and crept under her lee; down came ropes to them, held by friendly hands, and friendly faces shone down at them; eager grasps seized each as he went up the ship's side, and so, in a very short time, they sent the woman up, and the rest being all sailors, and clever as cats, they were safe on board the whaling-brig Maria, Captain Slocum, of Nantucket, U. S.

Their log, compass, and instruments were also saved.

The boat was cast adrift, and was soon after seen bottom upward on the crest of a wave.

The good Samaritan in command of the Maria supplied them with dry clothes out of the ship's stores, good food, and medical attendance, which was much needed, their legs and feet being in a deplorable condition, and their own surgeon crippled.

A southeasterly gale induced the American skipper to give Cape Horn a wide berth, and the Maria soon found herself three degrees south of that perilous coast. There she encountered field-ice. In this labyrinth they dodged and worried for eighteen days, until a sudden chop in the wind gave the captain a chance, of which he promptly availed himself; and in forty hours they sighted Terra del Fuego.

During this time, the rescued crew, having recovered from the effects of their hardships, fell into the work of the ship, and took their turns with the Yankee seamen. The brig was short-handed; but now trimmed and handled by a full crew and the Proserpine's men, who were first-class seamen, and worked with a will, because work was no longer a duty, she exhibited a speed the captain had almost forgotten was in the craft. Now speed at sea means economy, for every day added to a voyage is so much off the profits. Slocum was part owner of the vessel, and shrewdly alive to the value of the seamen. When about three hundred miles south of Buenos Ayres, Wylie proposed that they should be landed there, from whence they might be transhipped to a vessel bound for home.

This was objected to by Slocum, on the ground that by such a deviation from his course, he must lose three days, and the port-dues at Buenos Ayres were heavy.

Wylie undertook that the house of Wardlaw and Son should indemnify the brig for all expenses and losses incurred.

Still the American hesitated; at last he honestly told Wylie he wished to keep the men; he liked them, they liked him. He had sounded them, and they had no objection to join his ship, and sign articles for a three years' whaling voyage, provided they did not thereby forfeit the wages to which they would be entitled on reaching Liverpool. Wylie went forward and asked the men if they would take service with the Yankee captain. All but three expressed their desire to do so; these three had families in England, and refused. The mate gave the others a release, and an order on Wardlaw and Co., for their full wages for the voyage; then they signed articles with Captain Slocum, and entered the American Mercantile Navy.

Two days after this they sighted the high lands at the mouth of the Río de la Plata at 10 P.M., and lay to for a pilot. After three hours' delay they were boarded by a pilot-boat, and then began to creep into the port. The night was very dark, and a thin white fog lay on the water.

Wylie was sitting on the taffrail, and conversing with Slocum, when the lookout forward sung out, "Sail ho!"

Another voice almost simultaneously yelled out of the fog, "Port your helm!"

Suddenly out of the mist, and close aboard the Maria appeared the hull and canvas of a large ship. The brig was crossing her course, and her great bowsprit barely missed the brig's mainsail. It stood for a moment over Wylie's head. He looked up, and there was the figure-head of the ship looming almost within his reach. It was a colossal green woman; one arm extended grasped a golden harp, the other was pressed to her head in the attitude of holding back her wild and flowing hair. The face seemed to glare down upon the two men: in another moment the monster, gliding on, just missing the brig, was lost in the fog.

"That was a narrow squeak," said Slocum.

Wylie made no answer, but looked into the darkness after the vessel.

He had recognized her figure-head.

It was the Shannon!

CHAPTER XIV.

BEFORE the Maria sailed again, with the men who formed a part of Wylie's crew, he made them sign a declaration before the English Consul at Buenos Ayres. This document set forth the manner in which the Proserpine foundered; it was artfully made up of facts enough to deceive a careless listener; but, when Wylie read it over to them, he slurred over certain parts, which he took care, also, to express in language above the comprehension of such men. Of course they assented eagerly to what they did not understand, and signed the statement conscientiously.

So Wylie and his three men were shipped on board the Boadicea, bound for Liverpool, in Old England, while the others sailed with Captain Slocum for Nantucket, in New England.

The Boadicea was a clipper laden with hides and a miscellaneous cargo. For seventeen days she flew before a southerly gale, being on her best sailing point, and, after one of the shortest passages she had ever made, she lay to, outside the bar, off the Mersey. It waited but one hour to daylight, the tide was flowing; the pilot sprang aboard.

"What do you draw?" he asked of the master.

"Fifteen feet, barely," was the reply.

"That will do," and the vessel's head was laid for the river.

They passed a large bark, with her topsails backed.

"Ay," remarked the pilot, "she has waited since the half-ebb; there ain't more than four hours in the twenty-four that such craft as that can get in."

"What is she? An American liner?" asked Wylie, peering through the gloom.

"No," said the pilot; "she's an Australian ship. She's the Shannon, from Sydney."

The mate started, looked at the man, then at the vessel. Twice the Shannon had thus met him, as if to satisfy him that his object had been attained, and each time she seemed to him not an inanimate thing but a silent accomplice. A chill of fear struck through the man's frame as he looked at her. Yes, there she lay, and in her hold were safely stowed £160,000 in gold, marked lead and copper.

Wylie had no luggage nor effects to detain him on board; he landed, and, having bestowed his three companions in a sailors' boarding-house, he was hastening to the shipping agents of Wardlaw and Son to announce his arrival and the fate of the Proserpine. He had reached their offices in Water Street before he recollected that it was barely half past five o'clock, and, though broad daylight on that July morning, merchants' offices are not open at that hour. The sight of the Shannon had so bewildered him that he had not noticed that the shops were all shut, the streets deserted. Then a thought occurred to him, why not be a bearer of his own news? He did not require to turn the idea twice over, but resolved, for many reasons, to adopt it. As he hurried to the railway station, he tried to recollect the hour at which the early train started; but his confused and excited mind refused to perform the function of memory. The Shannon dazed him.

At the railway station he found that a train had started at 4 A.M., and there was nothing until 7.30. This check sobered him a little, and he went back to the docks; he walked out to the farther end of that noble line of berths, and sat down on the verge with his legs dangling over the water. He waited an hour; it was six o'clock by the great dial at St. George's Dock. His eyes were fixed on the Shannon, which was moving slowly up the river; she came abreast to where he sat. The few sails requisite to give her steerage fell. Her anchor-chain rattled, and she swung round with the tide. The clock struck the half-hour; a boat left the side of the vessel and made straight for the steps near where he was seated. A tall, noble-looking man sat in

the stern-sheets beside the coxswain ; he was put ashore, and, after exchanging a few words with the boat's crew, he mounted the steps which led him to Wylie's side, followed by one of the sailors, who carried a portmanteau.

He stood for a single moment on the quay, and stamped his foot on the broad stones ; then, heaving a deep sigh of satisfaction, he murmured, "Thank God !"

He turned towards Wylie.

"Can you tell me, my man, at what hour the first train starts for London?"

"There is a slow train at 7 30 and an express at 9."

"The express will serve me, and give me time for breakfast at the Adelphi. Thank you ; good-morning ;" and the gentleman passed on, followed by the sailor.

Wylie looked after him ; he noted that erect military carriage and crisp, gray hair and thick white mustache ; he had a vague idea that he had seen that face before, and the memory troubled him.

At 7 30 Wylie started for London ; the military man followed him in the express at 9, and caught him up at Rugby ; together they arrived at the station at Euston Square ; it was a quarter to three. Wylie hailed a cab, but, before he could struggle through the crowd to reach it, a railway porter threw a portmanteau on its roof, and his military acquaintance took possession of it.

"All right," said the porter. "What address, sir?"

Wylie did not hear what the gentleman said, but the porter shouted it to the cabman, and then he did hear it.

"No. — Russell Square."

It was the house of Arthur Wardlaw !

Wylie took off his hat, rubbed his frowzy hair, and gaped after the cab.

He entered another cab, and told the driver to go to "No. — Fenchurch Street."

It was the office of Wardlaw and Son.

CHAPTER XV.

OUR scene now changes from the wild ocean and its perils to a snug room in Fenchurch Street, the inner office of Wardlaw and Son ; a large apartment, panelled with fine old mellow Spanish oak ; and all the furniture in keeping ; the carpet, a thick Axminster of sober colors ; the chairs, of oak and morocco, very substantial ; a large office-table, with oaken legs like very columns, substantial ; two Milner safes ; a globe of unusual size, with a handsome tent over it, made of roan leather, figured ; the walls hung with long oak boxes, about eight inches broad, containing rolled maps of high quality and great dimensions ; to consult which, oaken sceptres tipped with brass hooks stood ready : with these the great maps could be drawn down and inspected ; and, on being released, flew up into their wooden boxes again. Besides these were hung up a few drawings, representing outlines, and inner sections, of vessels : and, on a smaller table, lay models, almanacs, etc. The great office-table was covered with writing materials and papers, all but a square space inclosed with a lit-

tle silver rail, and inside that space lay a purple morocco case about ten inches square ; it was locked, and contained an exquisite portrait of Helen Rolleston.

This apartment was so situated, and the frames of the plate-glass windows so well made and substantial, that, let a storm blow a thousand ships ashore, it could not be felt, nor heard in Wardlaw's inner office.

But appearances are deceitful ; and who can wall out a sea of troubles, and the tempests of the mind?

The inmate of that office was battling for his commercial existence, under accumulated difficulties and dangers. Like those who sailed the Proserpine's long-boat, upon that dirty night, which so nearly swamped her, his eye had now to be on every wave, and the sheet forever in his hand.

His measures had been ably taken ; but, as will happen when clever men are driven into a corner, he had backed events rather too freely against time ; had allowed too slight a margin for unforeseen delays. For instance, he had averaged the Shannon's previous performances, and had calculated on her arrival too nicely. She was a fortnight overdue, and that delay brought peril.

He had also counted upon getting news of the Proserpine. But not a word had reached Lloyd's as yet.

At this very crisis came the panic of '66. Overend and Gurney broke ; and Wardlaw's experience led him to fear that, sooner or later, there would be a run on every bank in London. Now he had borrowed £80,000 at one bank, and £35,000 at another : and, without his ships, could not possibly pay a quarter of the money. If the banks in question were run upon, and obliged to call in all their resources, his credit must go ; and this, in his precarious position, was ruin.

He had concealed his whole condition from his father, by false book-keeping. Indeed, he had only two confidants in the world ; poor old Michael Penfold, and Helen Rolleston's portrait ; and even to these two he made half confidences. He dared not tell either of them all he had done, and all he was going to do.

His redeeming feature was as bright as ever. He still loved Helen Rolleston with a chaste, constant, and ardent affection that did him honor. He loved money too well : but he loved Helen better. In all his troubles and worries, it was his one consolation to unlock her portrait, and gaze on it, and purify his soul for a few minutes. Sometimes he would apologize to it for an act of doubtful morality. "How can I risk the loss of you?" was his favorite excuse. No : he must have credit. He must have money. She must not suffer by his past imprudences. They must be repaired at any cost—for her sake.

It was ten o'clock in the morning ; Mr. Penfold was sorting the letters for his employer, when a buxom young woman rushed into the outer office, crying, "Oh, Mr. Penfold !" and sank into a chair, breathless.

"Dear heart ! what is the matter now?" said the old gentleman.

"I have had a dream, sir : I dreamed I saw Joe Wylie out on the seas, in a boat ; and the wind it was a blowing and the sea a roaring to

that degree as Joe looked at me, and says he, 'Pray for me, Nancy Rouse.' So I says, 'Oh dear, Joe, what is the matter? and what ever is become of the Proserpine?'

"'Gone to hell!' says he: which he knows I object to foul language. 'Gone—there—' says he, 'and I am sailing in her wake. Oh, pray for me, Nancy Rouse!' With that, I tries to pray in my dream, and screams instead, and wakes myself. Oh, Mr. Penfold, do tell me, have you got any news of the Proserpine this morning?"

"What is that to you?" inquired Arthur Wardlaw, who had entered just in time to hear this last query.

"What is it to me!" cried Nancy, firing up; "it is more to me, perhaps, than it is to you, for that matter."

Penfold explained, timidly, "Sir, Mrs. Rouse is my landlady."

"Which I have never been to church with any man yet of the name of Rouse, leastways, not in my waking hours," edged in the lady.

"Miss Rouse, I should say," said Penfold, apoloizing. "I beg pardon, but I thought Mrs. might sound better in a landlady. Please, sir, Mr. Wylie, the mate of the Proserpine, is her—her—sweetheart."

"Not he. Leastways, he is only on trial, after a manner."

"Of course, sir—only after a manner," added Penfold, sadly perplexed. "Miss Rouse is incapable of any thing else. But, if you please, m'm, I don't presume to know the exact relation;" and then with great reserve, "but you know you are anxious about him."

Miss Rouse sniffed, and threw her nose in the air,—as if to throw a doubt even on that view of the matter.

"Well, madam," says Wardlaw, "I am sorry to say I can give you no information. I share your anxiety, for I have got £160,000 of gold in the ship. You might inquire at Lloyd's. Direct her there, Mr. Penfold, and bring me my letters."

With this he entered his inner office, sat down, took out a golden key, opened the portrait of Helen, gazed at it, kissed it, uttered a deep sigh, and prepared to face the troubles of the day.

Penfold brought in a leathern case like an enormous bill-book: it had thirty vertical compartments: and the names of various cities and sea-ports, with which Wardlaw and Son did business, were printed in gold letters on some of these compartments; on others, the names of persons; and on two compartments, the word "Miscellaneous." Michael brought this machine in, filled with a correspondence enough to break a man's heart to look at.

This was one of the consequences of Wardlaw's position. He durst not let his correspondence be read, and filtered, in the outer office: he opened the whole mass; sent some back into the outer office: then touched a hand-bell, and a man emerged from the small apartment adjoining his own. This was Mr. Atkins, his shorthand writer. He dictated to this man some twenty letters, which were taken down in shorthand; the man retired to copy them, and write them out in duplicate from his own notes, and this reduced the number to seven; these Wardlaw sat down to write himself, and lock up the copies.

While he was writing them, he received a

visitor or two, whom he dispatched as quickly as his letters.

He was writing his last letter, when he heard in the outer office a voice he thought he knew. He got up and listened. It was so. Of all the voices in the city, this was the one it most dismayed him to hear in his office at the present crisis.

He listened on, and satisfied himself that a fatal blow was coming. He then walked quietly to his table, seated himself, and prepared to receive the stroke with external composure.

Penfold announced, "Mr. Burtenshaw."

"Show him in," said Wardlaw, quietly.

Mr. Burtenshaw, one of the managers of Morland's bank, came in, and Wardlaw motioned him courteously to a chair, while he finished his letter, which took only a few moments.

While he was sealing it, he half turned to his visitor, and said, "No bad news? Morland's is safe of course."

"Well," said Burtenshaw, "there is a run upon the bank,—a severe one. We could not hope to escape the effects of a panic."

He then, after an uneasy pause, and with apparent reluctance, added, "I am requested by the other directors to assure you it is their present extremity alone, that— In short, we are really compelled to beg you to repay the amount advanced to you by the bank."

Wardlaw showed no alarm, but great surprise. This was clever; for he felt great alarm, and no surprise.

"The £81,000," said he. "Why, that advance was upon the freight of the Proserpine. Forty-five thousand ounces of gold. She ought to be here by this time. She is in the Channel at this moment, no doubt."

"Excuse me; she is overdue, and the underwriters uneasy. I have made inquiries."

"At any rate, she is fully insured, and you hold the policies. Besides, the name of Wardlaw on your books should stand for bullion."

Burtenshaw shook his head. "Names are at a discount to-day, sir. We can't pay you down on the counter. Why, our depositors look cross at Bank of England notes."

To an inquiry, half ironical, whether the managers really expected him to find £81,000 cash at a few hours' notice, Burtenshaw replied, sorrowfully, that they felt for his difficulty whilst deploring their own; but that, after all, it was a debt; and, in short, if he could find no means of paying it, they must suspend payment for a time, and issue a statement—and—

He hesitated to complete his sentence, and Wardlaw did it for him.

"And ascribe your suspension to my inability to refund this advance?" said he, bitterly.

"I am afraid that is the construction it will bear."

Wardlaw rose, to intimate he had no more to say.

Burtenshaw, however, was not disposed to go without some clear understanding. "May I say we shall hear from you, sir?"

"Yes."

And so they wished each other good-morning; and Wardlaw sank into his chair.

In that quiet dialogue, ruin had been inflicted and received without any apparent agitation; ay, and worse than ruin,—exposure.

Morland's suspension, on account of money lost by Wardlaw and Son, would at once bring old Wardlaw to London, and the affairs of the firm would be investigated, and the son's false system of book-keeping be discovered.

He sat stupefied awhile, then put on his hat, and rushed to his solicitor; on the way, he fell in with a great talker, who told him there was a rumor the Shannon was lost in the Pacific.

At this he nearly fainted in the street; and his friend took him back to his office in a deplorable condition. All this time he had been feigning anxiety about the *Proserpine*, and concealing his real anxiety about the Shannon. To do him justice, he lost sight of every thing in the world now but Helen. He sent old Penfold in hot haste to Lloyd's, to inquire for news of the ship; and then he sat down sick at heart; and all he could do now was to open her portrait, and gaze at it through eyes blinded with tears. Even a vague rumor, which he hoped might be false, had driven all his commercial manoeuvres out of him, and made all other calamities seem small.

And so they all are small, compared with the death of the creature we love.

While he sat thus, in a stupor of fear and grief, he heard a well-known voice in the outer office; and, next after Burtenshaw's, it was the one that caused him the most apprehension. It was his father's.

Wardlaw senior rarely visited the office now; and this was not his hour. So Arthur knew something extraordinary had brought him up to town. And he could not doubt that it was the panic, and that he had been to Morland's, or would go there in course of the day; but, indeed, it was more probable that he had already heard something, and was come to investigate.

Wardlaw senior entered the room.

"Good-morning, Arthur," said he. "I've got good news for you."

Arthur was quite startled by an announcement that accorded so little with his expectations.

"Good news—for me?" said he, in a faint, incredulous tone.

"Ay, glorious news! Haven't you been anxious about the Shannon? I have; more anxious than I would own."

Arthur started up. "The Shannon! God bless you, father."

"She lies at anchor in the Mersey," roared the old man, with all a father's pride at bringing such good news. "Why, the Rollestons will be in London at 2 15. See, here is his telegram."

At this moment in ran Penfold, to tell them that the Shannon was up at Lloyd's—had anchored off Liverpool last night.

There was hearty shaking of hands, and Arthur Wardlaw was the happiest man in London—for a little while.

"Got the telegram at Elm-trees, this morning, and came up by the first express," said Wardlaw senior.

The telegram was from Sir Edward Rolleston. "*Reached Liverpool last night; will be at Euston, two-fifteen.*"

"Not a word from her?"

"Oh, there was no time to write; and ladies do not use the telegram." He added slyly,

"Perhaps she thought coming in person would do as well, or better, eh!"

"But why does he telegraph you instead of me?"

"I am sure I don't know. What does it matter? Yes, I do know. It was settled months ago that he and Helen should come to me at Elm-trees, so I was the proper person to telegraph. I'll go and meet them at the station; there is plenty of time. But, I say, Arthur, have you seen the papers? Bartley Brothers obliged to wind up. Maple and Cox, of Liverpool, gone; Atlantic trading. Terry and Brown suspended, International credit gone. Old friends, some of these. Hopley and Timms, railway contractors, failed, sir; liabilities, seven hundred thousand pounds and more."

"Yes, sir," said Arthur, pompously: "1866 will long be remembered for its revelations of commercial morality."

The old gentleman, on this, asked his son, with excusable vanity, whether he had done ill in steering clear of speculation; he then congratulated him on having listened to good advice, and stuck to legitimate business. "I must say, Arthur," added he, "your books are models for any trading firm."

Arthur winced in secret under this praise, for it occurred to him that in a few days his father would discover those books were all a sham, and the accounts a fabrication.

However, the unpleasant topic was soon interrupted, and effectually, too; for Michael looked in with an air of satisfaction on his benevolent countenance, and said, "Gentlemen, such an arrival! Here is Miss Rouse's sweetheart, that she dreamed was drowned."

"What is the man to me?" said Arthur, peevishly. He did not recognize Wylie under that title.

"La, Mr. Arthur! why, he is the mate of the *Proserpine*," said Penfold.

"What! Wylie! Joseph Wylie?" cried Arthur, in a sudden excitement, that contrasted strangely with his previous indifference.

"What is that?" cried Wardlaw senior; "the *Proserpine*: show him in at once."

Now this caused Arthur Wardlaw considerable anxiety; for obvious reasons he did not want his father and this sailor to exchange a word together. However, that was inevitable now; the door opened, and the bronzed face and sturdy figure of Wylie, clad in a rough pea-jacket, came slouching in.

Arthur went hastily to meet him, and gave him an expressive look of warning, even while he welcomed him in cordial accents.

"Glad to see you safe home," said Wardlaw senior.

"Thank ye, guv'nor," said Wylie. "Had a squeak for it, this time."

"Where is your ship?"

Wylie shook his head sorrowfully. "Bottom of the Pacific."

"Good heavens! What! is she lost?"

"That she is, sir: foundered at sea, 1200 miles from the Horn, and more."

"And the freight? the gold?" put in Arthur, with well-feigned anxiety.

"Not an ounce saved," said Wylie, disconsolately. "A hundred and sixty thousand pounds gone to the bottom."

"Good heavens!"

"Yesee, sir," said Wylie, "the ship encountered one gale after another, and labored a good deal, first and last; and we all say her seams must have opened; for we never could find the leak that sunk her," and he cast a meaning glance at Arthur Wardlaw.

"No matter how it happened," said the old merchant: "are we insured to the full: that is the first question?"

"To the last shilling."

"Well done, Arthur."

"But still it is most unlucky. Some weeks must elapse before the insurances can be realized, and a portion of the gold was paid for in bills at short date."

"The rest in cash?"

"Cash and merchandise."

"Then there is the proper margin. Draw on my private account, at the Bank of England."

These few simple words showed the struggling young merchant a way out of all his difficulties.

His heart leaped so he dared not reply, lest he should excite the old gentleman's suspicions.

But ere he could well draw his breath for joy, came a freezer.

"Mr. Burtenshaw, sir."

"Bid him wait," said Arthur, aloud, and cast a look of great anxiety on Penfold, which the poor old man, with all his simplicity, comprehended well enough.

"Burtenshaw, from Morland's. What does he want of us?" said Wardlaw senior, knitting his brows.

Arthur turned cold all over. "Perhaps to ask me not to draw out my balance. It is less than usual: but they are run upon; and, as you are good enough to let me draw on you—By-the-by, perhaps you will sign a check before you go to the station."

"How much do you want?"

"I really don't know, till I have consulted Penfold: the gold was a large and advantageous purchase, sir."

"No doubt; no doubt. I'll give you my signature; and you can fill in the amount."

He drew a check in favor of Arthur Wardlaw, signed it, and left him to fill in the figures.

He then looked at his watch, and remarked they would barely have time to get to the station.

"Good heavens!" cried Arthur; "and I can't go. I must learn the particulars of the loss of the *Proserpine*, and prepare the statement at once for the underwriters."

"Well, never mind. I can go."

"But what will she think of me? I ought to be the first to welcome her."

"I'll make your excuses."

"No, no; say nothing: after all, it was you who received the telegram: so you naturally meet her; but you will bring her here, father: you won't whisk my darling down to Elm-trees, till you have blest me with the sight of her."

"I will not be so cruel, fond lover," said old Wardlaw, laughing, and took up his hat and gloves to go.

Arthur went to the door with him, in great anxiety, lest he should question Burtenshaw: but, peering into the outer office, he observed Burtenshaw was not there. Michael had caught his employer's anxious look, and conveyed the banker into the small room where the short-hand

writer was at work. But Burtenshaw was one of a struggling firm; to him every minute was an hour: he had sat, fuming with impatience, so long as he heard talking in the inner office; and, the moment it ceased, he took the liberty of coming in: so that he opened the side door just as Wardlaw senior was passing through the centre door.

Instantly Wardlaw junior whipped before him, to hide his figure from his retreating father.

Wylie—who all this time had been sitting silent, looking from one to the other, and quietly puzzling out the game, as well as he could—observed this movement, and grinned.

As for Arthur Wardlaw, he saw his father safe out, then gave a sigh of relief, and walked to his office table, and sat down, and began to fill in the check.

Burtenshaw drew near, and said, "I am instructed to say that fifty thousand pounds on account will be accepted."

Perhaps if this proposal had been made a few seconds sooner, the ingenious Arthur would have availed himself of it: but as it was, he preferred to take the high and mighty tone. "I decline any concession," said he. "Mr. Penfold, take this check to the Bank of England. £81,647 10s. That is the amount, capital and interest, up to noon this day: hand the sum to Mr. Burtenshaw, taking his receipt, or, if he prefers it, pay it across the counter, to my credit. That will perhaps arrest the run."

Burtenshaw stammered out his thanks.

Wardlaw cut him short. "Good-morning, sir," said he. "I have business of importance. Good-day," and bowed him out.

"This is a high-flier," thought Burtenshaw.

Wardlaw then opened the side door, and called his short-hand writer.

"Mr. Atkins, please step into the outer office, and don't let a soul come in to me. Mind, I am out for the day. Except to Miss Rolleston and her father."

He then closed all the doors, and sunk exhausted into a chair, muttering, "Thank Heaven! I have got rid of them all for an hour or two. Now, Wylie."

Wylie seemed in no hurry to enter upon the required subject.

Said he, evasively, "Why, guv'nor, it seems to me you are among the breakers here yourself."

"Nothing of the sort, if you have managed your work cleverly. Come, tell me all, before we are interrupted again."

"Tell ye all about it! Why, there's part on't I am afraid to think on; let alone talk about it."

"Spare me your scruples, and give me your facts," said Wardlaw, coldly. "First of all, did you succeed in shifting the bullion as agreed?"

The sailor appeared relieved by this question. "Oh, that is all right," said he. "I got the bullion safe aboard the *Shannon*, marked for lead."

"And the lead on board the *Proserpine*?"

"Ay, shipped as bullion."

"Without suspicion?"

"Not quite."

"Great Heaven! Who?"

"One clerk at the shipping agent's scented something queer, I think. James Seaton. *That was the name he went by.*"

"Could he prove any thing?"

"Nothing. He knew nothing for certain;

and what he guessed won't never be known in England now." And Wylie fidgeted in his chair.

Notwithstanding this assurance Wardlaw looked grave, and took a note of that clerk's name. Then he begged Wylie to go on. "Give me all the details," said he. "Leave me to judge their relative value. You scuttled the ship?"

"Don't say that! don't say that!" cried Wylie in a low but eager voice. "Stone walls have ears." Then rather more loudly than was necessary, "Ship sprung aleak, that neither the captain, nor I, nor any body could find, to stop. Me, and my men, we all think her seams opened, with stress of weather." Then, lowering his voice again, "Try and see it as we do; and don't you ever use such a word as that what come out of your lips just now. We pumped her hard; but it warn't no use. She filled, and we had to take to the boats."

"Stop a moment. Was there any suspicion excited?"

"Not among the crew: and, suppose there was, I could talk 'em all over or buy 'em all over, what few of 'em is left. I've got 'em all with me in one house: and they are all square, don't you fear."

"Well, but you said 'among the crew.' Whom else can we have to fear?"

"Why, nobody. To be snre, one of the passengers was down on me; but what does that matter now?"

"It matters greatly—is matters terribly. Who was this passenger?"

"He called himself the Rev. John Hazel. He suspected something or other; and what with listening here, and watching there, he judged the ship was never to see England, and I always fancied he told the lady."

"What, was there a lady there?"

"Ay, worse luck, sir; and a pretty girl she was: coming home to England to die of consumption; so our surgeon told me."

"Well, never mind her. The clergyman! This fills me with anxiety. A clerk suspecting us at Sydney, and a passenger suspecting us in the vessel. There are two witnesses against us already."

"No; only one."

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, White's clerk and the parson, they was one man."

Wardlaw stared in utter amazement.

"Don't ye believe me?" said Wylie. "I tell ye that there clerk boarded us under an alias. He had shaved off his beard; but bless your heart, I knew him directly."

"He came to verify his suspicions," suggested Wardlaw, in a faint voice.

"Not he. He came for love of the sick girl, and nothing else; and you'll never see either him or her, if that is any comfort to you."

"Be good enough to conceal nothing. Facts must be faced."

"That is too, true sir. Well, we abandoned her and took to the boats. I commanded one."

"And Hudson the other?"

"Hudson! No."

"Why, how was that? and what has become of him?"

"What has become of Hudson?" said Wylie, with a start. "There's a question! And not a drop to wet my lips and warm my heart. Is

this a tale to tell dry? Can't ye spare a drop of brandy to a poor devil that has earned ye £150,000, and risked his life and wrecked his soul to do it?"

Wardlaw cast a glance of contempt on him, but got up and speedily put a bottle of old brandy, a tumbler, and a caraffe of water on the table before him.

Wylie drank a wineglassful neat, and gave a sort of sigh of satisfaction. And then ensued a dialogue, in which, curiously enough, the brave man was agitated, and the timid man was cool and collected. But one reason was, the latter had not imagination enough to realize things unseen, though he had caused them.

Wylie told him how Hudson got to the bottle, and would not leave the ship. "I think I see him now, with his cutlass in one hand and his rum-bottle in the other, and the waves running over his poor, silly face, as she went down. Poor Hiram! he and I had made many a trip together, before we took to this."

And Wylie shuddered, and took another gulp at the brandy.

While he was drinking to drown the picture, Wardlaw was calmly reflecting on the bare fact. "Hum," said he, "we must use that circumstance. I'll get it into the journal. Heroic captain. Went down with the ship. Who can suspect Hudson in the teeth of such a fact? Now pray go on, my good Wylie, the boats?"

"Well, sir, I had the surgeon, and ten men, and the lady's maid, on board the long-boat; and there was the parson, the sick lady, and five sailors aboard the cutter. We sailed together till night, steering for Juan Fernandez; then a fog came on and we lost sight of the cutter, and I altered my mind and judged it best to beat to win'ard, and get into the track of ships. Which we did, and were nearly swamped in a sou'wester; but by good luck, a Yankee whaler picked us up, and took us to Buenos Ayres, where we shipped for England, what was left of us, only four besides myself; but I got the signatures of the others to my tale of the wreck. It is all as square as a die, I tell you."

"Well done. Well done. But, stop! the other boat, with that sham parson on board, who knows all. She will be picked up, too, perhaps."

"There is no chance for that. She was out of the tracks of trade; and, I'll tell ye truth, sir." He poured out half a tumbler of brandy, and drank a part of it; and, now, for the first time his hand trembled as he lifted the glass. "Some fool had put the main of her provisions aboard the long-boat; that is what sticks to me, and won't let me sleep. We took a chance, but we didn't give one. I think I told you there was a woman aboard the cutter, that sick girl, sir. Oh, but it was hard lines for her, poor thing! I see her pale and calm; O Lord, so pale and calm; every night of my life; she kneeled aboard the cutter with her white hands clasped together, praying."

"Certainly, it is all very shocking," said Wardlaw; "but then you know, if they had escaped, they would have exposed us. Believe me, it is all for the best."

Wylie looked at him with wonder. "Ay," said he, after staring at him in wonder; "you can sit here at your ease, and doom a ship and risk her people's lives: but if you had to do it, and

see it, and then lie awake thinking of it, you'd wish all the gold on earth had been in hell before you put your hand to such a piece of work."

Wardlaw smiled a ghastly smile. "In short," said he, "you don't mean to take the three thousand pounds I pay you for this little job."

"Oh yes, I do; but for all the gold in Victoria I wouldn't do such a job again. And you mark my words, sir, we shall get the money, and nobody will ever be the wiser." Wardlaw rubbed his hands complacently: his egotism, coupled with his want of imagination, nearly blinded him to every thing but the pecuniary feature of the business. "But," continued Wylie, "we shall never thrive on it. We have sunk a good ship, and we have as good as murdered a poor dying girl."

"Hold your tongue, you fool!" cried Wardlaw, losing his *sang-froid* in a moment, for he heard somebody at the door.

It opened, and there stood a military figure in a travelling-cap—General Rolleston.

CHAPTER XVI.

As some eggs have actually two yolks, so Arthur Wardlaw had two hearts; and, at sight of Helen's father, the baser one ceased to beat for a while.

He ran to General Rolleston, shook him warmly by the hand, and welcomed him to England with sparkling eyes.

It is pleasant to be so welcomed, and the state-lieutenant returned his grasp in kind.

"Is Helen with you, sir?" said Wardlaw, making a movement to go to the door: for he thought she must be outside in the cab.

"No, she is not," said General Rolleston.

"There, now," said Arthur, "that cruel father of mine has broken his promise, and carried her off to Elm-trees!"

At this moment Wardlaw senior returned, to tell Arthur he had been just too late to meet the Rollestons. "Oh, here he is!" said he; and there were fresh greetings.

"Well, but," said Arthur, "where is Helen!"

"I think it is I who ought to ask that question," said Rolleston, gravely. "I telegraphed you at Elm-trees, thinking of course she would come with you to meet me at the station. It does not much matter, a few hours; but her not coming makes me uneasy, for her health was declining when she left me. How is my child, Mr. Wardlaw? Pray tell me the truth."

Both the Wardlaws looked at one another, and at General Rolleston, and the elder Wardlaw said there was certainly some misunderstanding here. "We fully believed that your daughter was coming home with you in the Shannon."

"Come home with me? Why, of course not. She sailed three weeks before me. Good Heavens! Has she not arrived?"

"No," replied old Wardlaw, "we have neither seen nor heard of her."

"Why, what ship did she sail in?" said Arthur.

"In the *Proserpine*."

CHAPTER XVII.

ARTHUR WARDLAW fixed on the speaker a gaze full of horror; his jaw fell; a livid pallor spread over his features; he echoed in a hoarse whisper, "The *Proserpine*?" and turned his scared eyes upon Wylie, who was himself leaning against the wall, his stalwart frame beginning to tremble.

"The sick girl," murmured Wylie, and a cold sweat gathered on his brow.

General Rolleston looked from one to another with strange misgivings, which soon deepened into a sense of some terrible calamity; for now a strong convulsion swelled Arthur Wardlaw's heart; his face worked fearfully; and, with a sharp and sudden cry, he fell forward on the table, and his father's arm alone prevented him from sinking like a dead man on the floor. Yet, though crushed and helpless, he was not insensible; that blessing was denied him.

General Rolleston implored an explanation.

Wylie, with downcast and averted face, began to stammer a few disconnected and unintelligible words; but old Wardlaw silenced him and said, with much feeling, "Let none but a father tell him. My poor, poor friend—the *Proserpine*! How can I say it?"

"Lost at sea," groaned Wylie.

At these fatal words the old warrior's countenance grew rigid; his large, bony hands gripped the back of the chair on which he leaned, and were white with their own convulsive force; and he bowed his head under the blow, without one word.

His was an agony too great and mute to be spoken; and there was silence in the room, broken only by the hysterical moans of the miserable plotter, who had drawn down this calamity on his own head. He was in no state to be left alone; and even the bereaved father found pity in his desolate heart for one who loved his lost child so well; and the two old men took him home between them, in a helpless and pitiable condition.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BUT this utter prostration of his confederate began to alarm Wylie, and rouse him to exertion. Certainly, he was very sorry for what he had done, and would have undone it and forfeited his £3000 in a moment, if he could. But, as he could not undo the crime, he was all the more determined to reap the reward. Why, that £3000, for aught he knew, was the price of his soul; and he was not the man to let his soul go gratis.

He finished the rest of the brandy, and went after his men, to keep them true to him by promises; but the next day he came to the office in Fenchurch Street, and asked anxiously for Wardlaw. Wardlaw had not arrived. He waited, but the merchant never came; and Michael told him, with considerable anxiety, that this was the first time his young master had missed coming this five years.

In course of the day, several underwriters came in, with long faces, to verify the report which had now reached Lloyd's, that the *Proserpine* had foundered at sea.

"It is too true," said Michael; "and poor Mr. Wylie here has barely escaped with his life. He was mate of the ship, gentlemen."

Upon this, each visitor questioned Wylie, and Wylie returned the same smooth answer to all inquiries: one heavy gale after another had so tried the ship that her seams had opened, and let in more water than all the exertions of the crew and passengers could discharge; at last, they had taken to the boats; the long-boat had been picked up: the cutter had never been heard of since.

They nearly all asked after the ship's log.

"I have got it safe at home," said he. It was in his pocket all the time.

Some asked him where the other survivors were. He told them five had shipped on board the Maria, and three were with him at Poplar, one disabled by the hardships they had all endured.

One or two complained angrily of Mr. Wardlaw's absence at such a time.

"Well, good gentlemen," said Wylie, "I'll tell ye. Mr. Wardlaw's sweetheart was aboard the ship. He is a'most broken-hearted. He valued her more than all the gold, that you may take your oath on."

This stroke, coming from a rough fellow in a pea-jacket, who looked as simple as he was cunning, silenced remonstrance, and went far to disarm suspicion; and so pleased Michael Penfold, that he said, "Mr. Wylie, you are interested in this business, would you mind going to Mr. Wardlaw's house, and asking what we are to do next? I'll give you his address, and a line, begging him to make an effort and see you. Business is the heart's best ointment. Eh, dear Mr. Wylie, I have known grief too; and I think I should have gone mad when they sent my poor son away, but for business, especially the summing up of long columns, etc."

Wylie called at the house in Russell Square, and asked to see Mr. Wardlaw.

The servant shook his head. "You can't see him; he is very ill."

"Very ill?" said Wylie. "I'm sorry for that. Well, but I sha'n't make him any worse; and Mr. Penfold says I must see him. It is very particular, I tell you. He won't thank you for refusing me, when he comes to hear of it."

He said this very seriously; and the servant, after a short hesitation, begged him to sit down in the passage a moment. He then went into the dining-room, and shortly re-appeared, holding the door open. Out came, not Wardlaw junior, but Wardlaw senior.

"My son is in no condition to receive you," said he, gravely; "but I am at your service. What is your business?"

Wylie was taken off his guard, and stammered out something about the Shannon.

"The Shannon! What have you to do with her? You belong to the Proserpine."

"Ay, sir; but I had his orders to ship forty chests of lead and smelted copper on board the Shannon."

"Well?"

"Ye see, sir," said Wylie, "Mr. Wardlaw was particular about them, and I feel responsible like, having shipped them aboard another vessel."

"Have you not the captain's receipt?"

"That I have, sir, at home. But you could hardly read it for salt water."

"Well," said Wardlaw senior, "I will direct our agent at Liverpool to look after them, and send them up at once to my cellars in Fenchurch Street. Forty chests of lead and copper, I think you said." And he took a note of this directly. Wylie was not a little discomfited at this unexpected turn things had taken; but he held his tongue now, for fear of making bad worse. Wardlaw senior went on to say that he should have to conduct the business of the firm for a time, in spite of his old age and failing health.

This announcement made Wylie perspire with anxiety, and his three thousand pounds seemed to melt away from him.

"But never mind," said old Wardlaw; "I am very glad you came. In fact, you are the very man I wanted to see. My poor afflicted friend has asked after you several times. Be good enough to follow me."

He led the way into the dining-room, and there sat the sad father in all the quiet dignity of calm, unfathomable sorrow.

Another gentleman stood upon the rug with his back to the fire, waiting for Mr. Wardlaw; this was the family physician, who had just come down from Arthur's bedroom, and had entered by another door through the drawing-room.

"Well, doctor," said Wardlaw, anxiously, "what is your report?"

"Not so good as I could wish; but nothing to excite immediate alarm. Overtaxed brain, sir, weakened and unable to support this calamity. However, we have reduced the fever; the symptoms of delirium have been checked, and I think we shall escape brain fever if he is kept quiet. I could not have said as much this morning."

The doctor then took his leave, with a promise to call next morning; and, as soon as he was gone, Wardlaw turned to General Rolleston, and said, "Here is Wylie, sir. Come forward, my man, and speak to the General. He wants to know if you can point out to him on the chart the very spot where the Proserpine was lost?"

"Well, sir," said Wylie, "I think I could."

The great chart of the Pacific was then spread out upon the table, and rarely has a chart been examined as this was, with the bleeding heart as well as the straining eye.

The rough sailor became an oracle; the others hung upon his words, and followed his brown finger on the chart with fearful interest.

"Ye see, sir," said he, addressing the old merchant, for there was something on his mind that made him avoid speaking directly to General Rolleston, "when we came out of Sydney, the wind being south and by west, Hudson took the northerly course instead of running through Cook's Straits. The weather freshened from the same quarter, so that, with one thing and another, by when we were a month out, she was five hundred miles or so nor'ard of her true course. But that wasn't all; when the leak gained on us, Hudson ran the ship three hundred miles by my reckoning to the nor'east; and, I remember, the day before she foundered, he told me she was in latitude forty, and Easter Island bearing due north."

"Here is the spot, then," said General Rolleston, and placed his finger on the spot.

"Ay, sir," said Wylie, addressing the merchant; "but she ran about eighty-five miles after that, on a northerly course—no—wind on her starboard quarter,—and, being deep in the water, she'd make lee way,—say eighty-two miles, nor'east by east."

The General took eighty-two miles off the scale, with a pair of dividers, and set out that distance on the chart. He held the instrument fixed on the point thus obtained.

Wylie eyed the point, and, after a moment's consideration, nodded his head.

"There, or thereabouts," he said, in a low voice, and looking at the merchant.

A pause ensued, and the two old men examined the speck pricked on the map, as if it were the waters covering the Proserpine.

"Now, sir," said Rolleston, "trace the course of the boats;" and he handed Wylie a pencil.

The sailor slowly averted his head, but stretched out his hand and took it, and traced two lines, the one short and straight, running nearly north-east. "That's the way the cutter headed when we lost her in the night."

The other line ran parallel to the first for half an inch, then, turning, bent backward and ran due south.

"This was *our* course," said Wylie.

General Rolleston looked up, and said, "Why did you desert the cutter?"

The mate looked at old Wardlaw, and, after some hesitation, replied: "After we lost sight of her, the men with me declared that we could not reach either Juan Fernandez or Valparaiso with our stock of provisions, and insisted on standing for the sea-track of Australian liners between the Horn and Sydney."

This explanation was received in dead silence. Wylie fidgeted, and his eye wandered round the room.

General Rolleston applied his compasses to the chart. "I find that the Proserpine was not one thousand miles from Easter Island. Why did you not make for that land?"

"We had no charts, sir," said Wylie to the merchant, "and I'm no navigator."

"I see no land laid down hereaway, northeast of the spot where the ship went down."

"No," replied Wylie, "that's what the men said when they made me 'bout ship."

"Then why did you lead the way north-east at all?"

"I'm no navigator," answered the man sullenly.

He then suddenly stammered out: "Ask my men what *we* went through. "Why, sir" (to Wardlaw), "I can hardly believe that I am alive, and sit here talking to you about this cursed business. And nobody offers me a drop of any thing."

Wardlaw poured him out a tumbler of wine. His brown hand trembled a little, and he gulped the wine down like water.

General Rolleston gave Mr. Wardlaw a look, and Wylie was dismissed. He slouched down the street all in a cold perspiration; but still clinging to his three thousand pounds, though small was now his hope of ever seeing it.

When he was gone General Rolleston paced that large and gloomy room in silence. Wardlaw eyed him with the greatest interest, but avoided speaking to him. At last he stopped

short, and stood erect, as veterans halt, and pointed down at the chart.

"I'll start at once for that spot," said he. "I'll go in the next ship bound to Valparaiso, there I'll charter a small vessel, and ransack those waters for some trace of my poor lost girl."

"Can you think of no better way than that?" said old Wardlaw, gently, and with a slight tone of reproach.

"No,—not at this moment. Oh yes, by-the-by, the Greyhound and Dreadnaught are going out to survey the islands of the Pacific. I have interest enough to get a berth in the Greyhound."

"What! go in a government ship! under the orders of a man, under the orders of another man, under the orders of a Board. Why, if you heard our poor girl was alive upon a rock, the Dreadnaught would be sure to run up a bunch of red-tape to the fore that moment to recall the Greyhound, and the Greyhound would go back. No," said he, rising suddenly, and confronting the General, and with the color mounting for once in his sallow face, "you sail in no bottom but one freighted by Wardlaw and Son, and the captain shall be under no orders but yours. We have bought the steam-sloop Springbok, seven hundred tons. I'll victual her for a year, man her well, and you shall go out in her in less than a week. I give you my hand on that."

They grasped hands.

But this sudden warmth and tenderness, coming from a man habitually cold, overpowered the stout General. "What, sir," he faltered; "your own son lies in danger, yet your heart goes so with me,—such goodness,—it is too much for me."

"No, no," faltered the merchant, affected in his turn; "it is nothing. Your poor girl was coming home in that cursed ship to marry my son. Yes, he lies ill for love of her; God help him and me too; but you most of all. Don't, General; don't! We have got work to do; we must be brave, sir; brave, I say, and compose ourselves. Ah, my friend, you and I are of one age; and this is a heavy blow for us: and we are friends no more; it has made us brothers: she was to be my child as well as yours; well, now she is my child, and our hearts they bleed together." At this, the truth must be told, the two stout old men embraced one another like two women, and cried together a little.

But that was soon over with such men as these. They sat together and plunged into the details of the expedition, and they talked themselves into hope.

In a week the Springbok steamed down the Channel on an errand inspired by love, not reason; to cross one mighty ocean, and grope for a lost daughter in another.

CHAPTER XIX.

WE return to the cutter and her living freight.

After an anxious but brief consultation, it was agreed that their best chance was to traverse as many miles of water as possible, while the wind was fair; by this means they would increase their small chance of being picked up,

and also of falling in with land, and would, at all events, sail into a lovely climate, where intense cold was unknown, and gales of wind uncommon. Mr. Hazel advised them to choose a skipper, and give him absolute power, especially over the provisions. They assented to this. He then recommended Cooper for that post. But they had not fathomed the sterling virtues of that taciturn seaman; so they offered the command to Welch instead.

"Me put myself over Sam Cooper!" said he; "not likely."

Then their choice fell upon Michael Morgan. The other sailors' names were Prince, Fenner, and Mackintosh.

Mr. Hazel urged Morgan to put the crew and passengers on short allowance at once, viz. two biscuits a day, and four table-spoonfuls of water; but Morgan was a common sailor; he could not see clearly very far ahead; and, moreover, his own appetite counteracted this advice; he dealt out a pound of biscuit and an ounce of ham to each person, night and morning, and a pint of water in course of the day.

Mr. Hazel declined his share of the ham, and begged Miss Rolleston so earnestly not to touch it, that she yielded a silent compliance.

On the fourth day the sailors were all in good spirits, though the provisions were now very low. They even sang, and spun yarns. This was partly owing to the beauty of the weather.

On the fifth day Morgan announced that he could only serve out one biscuit per day: and this sudden decline caused some dissatisfaction and alarm.

Next day, the water ran so low, that only a teaspoonful was served out night and morning.

There were murmurs and forebodings.

In all heavy trials and extremities some man or other reveals great qualities, that were latent in him, ay, hidden from himself. And this general observation was verified on the present occasion, as it had been in the Indian mutiny, and many other crises. Hazel came out.

He encouraged the men, out of his multifarious stores of learning. He related at length stories of wrecks and sufferings at sea; which, though they had long been in print, were most of them new to these poor fellows. He told them, among the rest, what the men of the *Bona Dea*, waterlogged at sea, had suffered,—twelve days without any food but a rat and a kitten,—yet had all survived. He gave them some details of the *Wager*, the *Grosvenor*, the *Corbin*, the *Medusa*; but above all, a most minute account of the *Bounty*, and Bligh's wonderful voyage in an open boat, short of provisions. He moralized on this, and showed his fellow-sufferers it was discipline and self-denial from the first that had enabled those hungry spectres to survive, and to traverse two thousand eight hundred miles of water, in those very seas; and that in spite of hunger, thirst, disease, and rough weather.

By these means he diverted their minds in some degree from their own calamity, and taught them the lesson they most needed.

The poor fellows listened with more interest than you could have thought possible under the pressure of bodily distress. And Helen Rolleston's hazel eye dwelt on the narrator with unceasing wonder.

Yes, learning and fortitude, strengthened by those great examples learning furnishes, maintained a superiority, even in the middle of the Pacific; and not the rough sailors only, but the lady who had rejected and scorned his love, hung upon the brave student's words: she was compelled to look up, with wonder, to the man she had hated and despised in her hours of ease.

On the sixth day the provisions failed entirely. Not a crust of bread: not a drop of water.

At 4 P.M. several flying-fish, driven into the air by the dolphins and cat-fish, fell into the sea again near the boat, and one struck the sail sharply, and fell into the boat. It was divided, and devoured raw, in a moment.

The next morning the wind fell, and, by noon, the ocean became like glass.

The horrors of a storm have been often painted; but who has described, or can describe, the horrors of a calm to a boat-load of hungry, thirsty creatures, whose only chances of salvation or relief are wind and rain?

The beautiful, remorseless sky was one vault of purple, with a great flaming jewel in the centre, whose vertical rays struck, and parched, and scorched the living sufferers; and blistered and baked the boat itself, so that it hurt their hot hands to touch it: the beautiful, remorseless ocean was one sheet of glass, that glared in their bloodshot eyes, and reflected the intolerable heat of heaven upon these poor wretches, who were gnawed to death with hunger; and their raging thirst was fiercer still.

Towards afternoon of the eighth day, Mackintosh dipped a vessel in the sea, with the manifest intention of drinking the salt water.

"Stop him" cried Hazel, in great agitation; and the others seized him, and overpowered him: he cursed them with such horrible curses, that Miss Rolleston put her fingers in her ears, and shuddered from head to foot. Even this was new to her, to hear foul language.

A calm voice rose in the midst, and said: "Let us pray."

There was a dead silence, and Mr. Hazel knelt down and prayed loud and fervently; and, while he prayed, the furious cries subsided for a while, and deep groans only were heard. He prayed for food, for rain, for wind, for patience.

The men were not so far gone but they could just manage to say "Amen."

He rose from his knees, and gathered the pale faces of the men together in one glance; and saw that intense expression of agony which physical pain can mould with men's features: and then he strained his eyes over the brassy horizon; but no cloud, no veil of vapor was visible.

"Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink."

"We must be mad," he cried, "to die of thirst with all this water round us."

His invention being stimulated by this idea, and his own dire need, he eagerly scanned every thing in the boat, and his eyes soon lighted on two objects disconnected in themselves, but it struck him he could use them in combination. These were a common glass bottle, and Miss Rolleston's life-preserving jacket, that served her for a couch. He drew this garment over his knees, and considered it attentively; then

untwisted the brass nozzle through which the jacket was inflated, and so left a tube, some nine inches in length, hanging down from the neck of the garment.

He now applied his breath to the tube, and the jacket swelling rapidly proved that the whole receptacle was air-tight.

He then allowed the air to escape. Next, he took the bottle and filled it with water from the sea; then he inserted, with some difficulty, and great care, the neck of the bottle into the orifice of the tube: this done, he detached the wire of the brass nozzle, and whipped the tube firmly round the neck of the bottle.

"Now, light a fire," he cried; "no matter what it costs."

The fore thwart was chopped up, and a fire soon spluttered and sparkled, for ten eager hands were feeding it: the bottle was then suspended over it, and, in due course, the salt water boiled and threw off vapor, and the belly of the jacket began to heave and stir. Hazel then threw cold water upon the outside, to keep it cool, and, while the men eagerly watched the bubbling bottle and swelling bag, his spirits rose, and he took occasion to explain that what was now going on under their eyes was, after all, only one of the great processes of Nature, done upon a small scale. "The clouds," said he "are but vapors drawn from the sea, by the heat of the sun: these clouds are composed of fresh water, and so the steam we are now raising from salt water will be fresh. We can't make whiskey, or brew beer, lads; but, thank Heaven, we can brew water; and it is worth all other liquors ten times told."

A wild "hurrah!" greeted these words.

But every novel experiment seems doomed to fail, or meet with some disaster. The water in the bottle had been reduced too low by vaporism, and the bottle burst suddenly, with a loud report. That report was followed by a piteous wail.

Hazel turned pale at this fatal blow: but, recovering himself, he said, "That is unfortunate; but it was a good servant while it lasted; give me the baler; and, Miss Rolleston, can you lend me a thimble?"

The tube of the life-preserver was held over the baler; and out trickled a small quantity of pure water, two thimblefuls apiece. Even that, as it passed over their swelling tongues and parched swallows, was a heavenly relief: but, alas, the supply was then exhausted.

Next day hunger seemed uppermost, and the men gnawed and chewed their tobacco-pouches; and two caps, that had been dressed with the hair on, were divided for food.

None was given to Mr. Hazel or Miss Rolleston; and this, to do the poor creatures justice, was the first instance of injustice or partiality the sailors had shown.

The lady, though tormented with hunger, was more magnanimous; she offered to divide the contents of her little medicine chest; and the globules were all devoured in a moment.

And now their tortures were aggravated by the sight of abundance. They drifted over coral rocks, at a considerable depth, but the water was so exquisitely clear that they saw five fathoms down. They discerned small fish drifting over the bottom; they looked like a

driving cloud, so vast was their number; and every now and then there was a scurry among them, and porpoises and dog-fish broke in and feasted on them. All this they saw, yet could not catch one of those billions for their lives. Thus they were tantalized as well as starved.

The next day was like the last, with this difference, that the sufferers could no longer endure their torments in silence.

The lady moaned constantly: the sailors groaned, lamented, and cursed.

The sun baked and blistered, and the water glared.

The sails being useless, the sailors rigged them as an awning, and salt water was constantly thrown over them.

Mr. Hazel took a baler and drenched his own clothes and Miss Rolleston's upon their bodies. This relieved the hell of thirst in some degree: but the sailors could not be persuaded to practise it.

In the afternoon Hazel took Miss Rolleston's Bible from her wasted hands, and read aloud the forty-second Psalm.

When he had done, one of the sailors asked him to pass the Bible forward. He did so; and in half an hour the leaves were returned him; the vellum binding had been cut off, divided, and eaten.

He looked piteously at the leaves, and, after a while, fell upon his knees and prayed silently.

He rose, and, with Miss Rolleston's consent, offered the men the leaves as well. "It is the Bread of Life for men's souls, not their bodies," said he. "But God is merciful; I think he will forgive you; for your need is bitter."

Cooper replied that the binding was man's, but the pages were God's; and, either for this or another more obvious reason, the leaves were declined for food.

All that afternoon Hazel was making a sort of rough spoon out of a fragment of wood.

The night that followed was darker than usual, and, about midnight, a hand was laid on Helen Rolleston's shoulder, and a voice whispered, "Hush! say nothing. I have got something for you."

At the same time, something sweet and deliciously fragrant was put to her lips; she opened her mouth, and received a spoonful of marmalade. Never did marmalade taste like that before. It dissolved itself like ambrosia over her palate, and even relieved her parched throat in some slight degree by the saliva it excited.

Nature could not be resisted; her body took whatever he gave. But her high mind rebelled.

"Oh, how base I am," said she, and wept.

"Why, it is your own," said he, soothingly; "I took it out of your cabin expressly for you." "At least oblige me by eating some yourself, sir," said Helen, "or" (with a sudden burst) "I will die ere I touch another morsel."

"I feel the threat, Miss Rolleston; but I do not need it, for I am very, very hungry. But no; if I take any, I must divide it all with *them*. But if you will help me unrip the jacket, I will suck the inside—after you."

Helen gazed at him, and wondered at the man and at the strange love which had so bitterly offended her when she was surrounded by comforts; but now it extorted her respect.

They unripped the jacket, and found some

moisture left. They sucked it, and it was a wonderful, and incredible relief to their parched gullets.

The next day was a fearful one. Not a cloud in the sky to give hope of rain; the air so light, it only just moved them along; and the sea glared, and the sun beat on the poor wretches, now tortured into madness with hunger and thirst.

The body of man, in this dire extremity, can suffer internal agony as acute as any that can be inflicted on its surface by the knife; and the cries, the screams, the groans, the prayers, the curses, intermingled, that issued from the boat, were not to be distinguished from the cries of men horribly wounded in battle, or writhing under some terrible operation in hospitals.

Oh, it was terrible and piteous to see and hear the boat-load of ghastly victims, with hollow cheeks, and wild-beast eyes, go groaning, cursing, and shrieking loud, upon that fair glassy sea, below that purple vault and glorious sun.

Towards afternoon, the sailors got together, forward, and left Hazel and Miss Rolleston alone in the stern. This gave him an opportunity of speaking to her confidentially. He took advantage of it, and said, "Miss Rolleston, I wish to consult you. Am I justified in secreting the marmalade any longer? There is nearly a spoonful apiece."

"No," said Helen, "divide it among them all. Oh, if I had only a woman beside me, to pray with, and cry with, and die with: for die we must."

"I am not so sure of that," said Hazel, faintly, but with a cool fortitude all his own. "Experience proves that the human body can subsist a prodigious time on very little food: and saturating the clothes with water is, I know, the best way to allay thirst. And women, thank Heaven, last longer than men, under privations."

"I shall not last long, sir," said Helen. "Look at their eyes."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that those men there are going to kill me."

CHAPTER XX.

HAZEL thought her reason was going; and, instead of looking at the men's eyes, it was hers he examined. But no; the sweet cheek was white, the eyes had a fearful hollow all round them, but, out of that cave, the light hazel eye, preternaturally large, but calm as ever, looked out, full of fortitude, resignation, and reason.

"Don't look at me," said she, quietly; "but take an opportunity and look at *them*. They mean to kill me."

Hazel looked furtively round; and, being enlightened in part by the woman's intelligence, he observed that some of the men were actually glaring at himself and Helen Rolleston in a dreadful way. There was a remarkable change in their eyes since he looked last. The pupils seemed diminished, the whites enlarged; and, in a word, the characteristics of humanity had, somehow, died out of those bloodshot orbs, and the animal alone shone in them now; the wild beast, driven desperate by hunger.

What he saw, coupled with Helen's positive interpretation of it, was truly sickening.

These men were six, and he but one. They had all clasp-knives; and he had only an old penknife that would be sure to double up, or break off, if a blow were dealt with it.

He asked himself in utter terror, what on earth he should do.

The first thing seemed to be to join the men, and learn their minds: it might also be as well to prevent this secret conference from going farther.

He went forward boldly, though sick at heart, and said, "Well, my lads, what is it?"

The men were silent directly, and looked sullenly down, avoiding his eye, yet not ashamed.

In a situation so terrible, the senses are sharpened; and Hazel dissected, in his mind, this sinister look, and saw that Morgan, Prince, and Mackintosh were hostile to him.

But, Welch and Cooper he hoped were still friendly.

"Sir," said Fenner, civilly but doggedly, "we are come to this now, that one must die, for the others to live: and the greater part of us are for casting lots all round, and let every man, and every woman too, take their chance. That is fair, Sam, isn't it?"

"It is fair," said Cooper, with a terrible doggedness. "But it is hard," he added.

"Harder than seven should die for one," said Mackintosh. "No, no; one must die for the seven."

Hazel represented, with all the force language possesses, that what they meditated was a crime, the fatal result of which was known by experience.

But they heard in ominous silence.

Hazel went back to Helen Rolleston, and sat down right before her.

"Well!" said she, with supernatural calmness.

"You were mistaken," said he.

"Then why have you placed yourself between them and me. No, no, their eyes have told me they have singled me out. But what does it matter? We poor creatures are all to die; and that one is the happiest that dies first, and dies unstained by such a crime. *I heard every word you said, sir.*"

Hazel cast a piteous look on her, and, finding he could no longer deceive her as to their danger, and being weakened by famine, fell to trembling and crying.

Helen Rolleston looked at him with calm and gentle pity. For a moment, the patient fortitude of a woman made her a brave man's superior.

Night came, and, for the first time, Hazel claimed two portions of the rum; one for himself and one for Miss Rolleston.

He then returned aft, and took the helm. He loosened it, so as to be ready to unship it in a moment, and use it as a weapon.

The men huddled together forward; and it was easy to see that the boat was now divided into two hostile camps.

Hazel sat quaking, with his hand on the helm, fearing an attack every moment.

Both he and Helen listened acutely, and about three o'clock in the morning a new incident occurred, of a terrible nature.

Mackintosh was heard to say, "Serve out the

rum, no allowance," and the demand was instantly complied with by Morgan.

Then Hazel touched Miss Rolleston on the shoulder, and insisted on her taking half what was left of the marmalade, and he took the other half. The time was gone by for economy; what they wanted now was strength, in case the wild beasts, maddened by drink as well as hunger, should attack them.

Already the liquor had begun to tell, and wild hallos and yells, and even fragments of ghastly songs mingled with the groans of misery, in the doomed boat.

At sunrise there was a great swell upon the water, and sharp gusts at intervals; and on the horizon, to windward, might be observed a black spot in the sky no bigger than a fly. But none saw that; Hazel's eye never left the raving wretches in the fore part of the boat; Cooper and Welch sat in gloomy despair amidsthips; and the others were huddled together forward, encouraging each other to a desperate act.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning Helen Rolleston awoke from a brief doze, and said, "Mr. Hazel, I have had a strange dream. I dreamed there was food, and plenty of it, on the outside of this boat."

While these strange words were yet in her mouth, three of the sailors suddenly rose up with their knives drawn, and eyes full of murder, and staggered aft as fast as their enfeebled bodies could.

Hazel uttered a loud cry, "Welch! Cooper! will you see us butchered?" and, unshipping the helm, rose to his feet.

Cooper put out his arm to stop Mackintosh, but was too late. He did stop Morgan, however, and said, "Come, none of that; no foul play!"

Irritated by this unexpected resistance, and maddened by drink, Morgan turned on Cooper and stabbed him; he sank down with a groan; on this Welch gave Morgan a fearful gash, dividing his jugular, and was stabbed, in return, by Prince, but not severely: these two grappled and rolled over one another, stabbing and cursing at the bottom of the boat; meantime, Mackintosh was received by Hazel with a point-blank thrust in the face from the helm, that staggered him, though a very powerful man, and drove him backward against the mast; but, in delivering this thrust, Hazel's foot slipped, and he fell with great violence on his head and arm; Mackintosh recovered himself, and sprang upon the stern thwart with his knife up and gleaming over Helen Rolleston. Hazel writhed round where he lay, and struck him desperately on the knee with the helm. The poor woman knew only how to suffer; she cowered a little, and put up two feeble hands.

The knife descended.

But not upon that cowering figure.

CHAPTER XXI.

A PURPLE rippling line upon the water had for some little time been coming down upon them with great rapidity; but, bent on bloody work, they had not observed it. The boat heeled over under a sudden gust; but the ruffian had already lost his footing under Hazel's blow, and, the

boom striking him almost at the same moment, he went clean over the gunwale into the sea; he struck it with his knife first.

All their lives were now gone if Cooper, who had already recovered his feet, had not immediately cut the sheet with his knife; there was no time to slack it; and, even as it was, the lower part of the sail was drenched, and the boat full of water. "Ship the helm!" he roared.

The boat righted directly the sheet was cut, the wet sail flapped furiously, and the boat having way on her, yielded to the helm and wriggled slowly away before the whistling wind.

Mackintosh rose a few yards astern, and swam after the boat, with great glaring eyes; the loose sail was not drawing, but the wind moved the boat onward. However, Mackintosh gained slowly, and Hazel held up an oar like a spear, and shouted to him that he must promise solemnly to forego all violence, or he should never come on board alive.

Mackintosh opened his mouth to reply; but, at the same moment, his eyes suddenly dilated in a fearful way, and he went under water, with a gurgling cry. Yet not like one drowning, but with a jerk.

The next moment there was a great bubbling of the water, as if displaced by some large creatures struggling below, and then the surface was stained with blood.

And, lest there should be any doubt as to the wretched man's fate, the rude back fin of a monstrous shark came soon after, gliding round and round the rolling boat, awaiting the next victim.

Now, while the water was yet stained with his life-blood, who, hurrying to kill, had met with a violent death, the unwounded sailor Fenner, excited by the fracas, broke forth into singing, and so completed the horror of a wild and awful scene; for still, while he shouted, laughed, and sang, the shark swam calmly round and round, and the boat crept on, her white sail bespattered with blood,—which was not so before,—and in her bottom lay one man dead as a stone; and two poor wretches, Prince and Welch, their short-lived feud composed forever, sat openly sucking their bleeding wounds, to quench for a moment their intolerable thirst.

Oh, little do we, who never pass a single day without bite or sup, know the animal man, in these dire extremities.

CHAPTER XXII.

At last Cooper ordered Fenner to hold his jaw, and come aft, and help sail the boat.

But the man, being now stark mad, took no notice of the order. His madness grew on him, and took a turn by no means uncommon in these cases. He saw before him sumptuous feasts, and streams of fresh water flowing. These he began to describe with great volubility and rapture, smacking his lips, and exulting: and so he went on tantalizing them till noon.

Meantime, Cooper asked Mr. Hazel if he could sail the boat.

"I can steer," said he, "but that is all. My right arm is benumbed."

The silvery voice of Helen Rolleston then utter-

ed brave and welcome words. "I will do whatever you tell me, Mr. Cooper."

"Long life to you, miss!" said the wounded seaman. He then directed her how to reef the sail, and splice the sheet which he had been obliged to cut; and, in a word, to sail the boat; which she did with some little assistance from Hazel.

And so they all depended upon her, whom some of them had been for killing: and the blood-stained boat glided before the wind.

At two P.M. Fenner jumped suddenly up, and, looking at the sea with rapture, cried out, "Aha! my boys, here's a beautiful green meadow; and there's a sweet brook with bulrushes: green, green, green! Let's have a roll among the daisies." And, in a moment, ere any of his stiff and wounded shipmates could put out a hand, he threw himself on his back upon the water, and sunk forever, with inexpressible rapture on his corpse-like face.

A feeble groan was the only tribute those who remained behind could afford him.

At three P.M. Mr. Hazel happened to look over the weather-side of the boat, as she heeled to leeward under a smart breeze, and he saw a shell or two fastened to her side, about eleven inches above keel. He looked again, and gave a loud hurrah. "Barnacles! barnacles!" he cried. "I see them sticking."

He leaned over, and, with some difficulty, detached one, and held it up.

It was not a barnacle, but a curious oblong shell-fish, open at one end.

At sight of this, the wounded forgot their wounds, and leaned over the boat's side, detaching the shell-fish with their knives. They broke them with the handles of their knives, and devoured the fish. They were as thick as a man's finger, and about an inch long, and as sweet as a nut. It seems that in the long calm these shell-fish had fastened on the boat. More than a hundred of them were taken off her weather-side, and evenly divided.

Miss Rolleston, at Hazel's earnest request, ate only six, and these very slowly, and laid the rest by. But the sailors could not restrain themselves; and Prince, in particular, gorged himself so fiercely that he turned purple in the face, and began to breathe very hard.

That black speck on the horizon had grown by noon to a beetle, and by three o'clock to something more like an elephant, and it now diffused itself into a huge black cloud, that gradually overspread the heavens; and at last, about half an hour before sunset, came a peculiar chill, and then, in due course, a drop or two fell upon the parched wretches. They sat, less like animals than like plants, all stretching towards their preserver.

Their eyes were turned up to the clouds, so were their open mouths, and their arms and hands held up towards it.

The drops increased in number, and praise went up to Heaven in return.

Patter, patter, patter; down came a shower, a rain,—a heavy, steady rain.

With cries of joy, they put out every vessel to catch it; they lowered the sail, and putting ballast in the centre, bellied it into a great vessel to catch it. They used all their spare canvas to catch it. They filled the water-cask with it; they

filled the keg that had held the fatal spirit; and all the time they were sucking the wet canvas, and their own clothes, and their very hands and garments on which the life-giving drops kept falling.

Then they set their little sail again, and prayed for land to Him who had sent them wind and rain.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE breeze declined at sunset; but it rained at intervals during the night; and by the morning they were somewhat chilled.

Death had visited them again during the night. Prince was discovered dead and cold; his wounds were mere scratches, and there seems to be no doubt that he died by gorging himself with more food than his enfeebled system could possibly digest.

Thus dismally began a day of comparative bodily comfort, but mental distress, especially to Miss Rolleston and Mr. Hazel.

Now that this lady and gentleman was no longer goaded to madness by physical suffering, their higher sensibilities resumed their natural force, and the miserable contents of the blood-stained boat shocked them terribly. Two corpses and two wounded men.

Mr. Hazel, however, soon came to one resolution, and that was to read the funeral service over the dead, and then commit them to the deep. He declared this intention, and Cooper, who, though wounded, and apparently sinking, was still skipper of the boat, acquiesced readily.

Mr. Hazel then took the dead men's knives and their money out of their pockets, and read the burial-service over them; they were then committed to the deep. This sad ceremony performed, he addressed a few words to the survivors.

"My friends, and brothers in affliction, we ought not to hope too much from Divine mercy for ourselves; or we should come soon to forget Divine justice. But we are not forbidden to hope for others. Those who have now gone were guilty of a terrible crime; but then they were tempted more than their flesh could bear; and they received their punishment here on earth: we may therefore hope they will escape punishment hereafter. And it is for us to profit by their fate, and how to Heaven's will: even when they drew their knives, food in plenty was within their reach, and the signs of wind were on the sea, and of rain in the sky. Let us be more patient than they were, and place our trust—What is that upon the water to leeward? A piece of wood floating?"

Welch stood up and looked. "Can't make it out. Steer alongside it, miss, if you please." And he crept forward.

Presently he became excited, and directed those in the stern how to steer the boat close to the object without going over it. He begged them all to be silent. He leaned over the boat-side as they neared it. He clutched it suddenly with both hands and flung it into the boat with a shout of triumph, but sank exhausted by the effort.

It was a young turtle; and being asleep on the water, or inexperienced, had allowed them to capture it.

This was indeed a godsend: twelve pounds of succulent meat. It was instantly divided, and Mr. Hazel contrived, with some difficulty, to boil a portion of it. He enjoyed it greatly; but Miss Rolleston showed a curious and violent antipathy to it, scarcely credible under the circumstances. Not so the sailors. They devoured it raw, what they could get at all. Cooper could only get down a mouthful or two: had received his death-wound, and was manifestly sinking.

He revived, however, from time to time, and spoke cheerfully, whenever he spoke at all. Welch informed him of every incident that took place, however minute. Then he would nod or utter a syllable or two.

On being told that they were passing through sea-weed, he expressed a wish to see some of it, and when he had examined it, he said to Hazel, "Keep up your heart, sir; you are not a hundred miles from land." He added gently, after a pause, "But I am bound for another port."

About five in the afternoon Welch came aft, with the tears in his eyes, to say that Sam was just going to slip his cable, and had something to say to them.

They went to him directly, and Hazel took his hand, and exhorted him to forgive all his enemies.

"Hain't a got none," was the reply.

Hazel then, after a few words of religious exhortation and comfort, asked him if he could do any thing for him.

"Ay," said Cooper, solemnly. "Got pen and ink aboard, any of ye?"

"I have a pencil," said Helen, earnestly; then, tearfully, "Oh dear! it is to make his will." She opened her prayer-book, which had two blank leaves under each cover.

The dying man saw them, and rose into that remarkable energy which sometimes precedes the departure of the soul.

"Write," said he, in his deep, full tones.

"I, Samuel Cooper, able seaman, am going to slip my cable, and sail into the presence of my Maker."

He waited till this was written.

"And so I speak the truth.

"The ship Proserpine was destroyed willful.

"The men had more allowance than they signed for.

"The mate was always plying the captain with liquor.

"Two days before ever the ship leaked, the mate got the long-boat ready.

"When the Proserpine sunk, we was on her port quarter, aboard the cutter, was me and my messmate Tom Welch.

"We saw two anger-holes in her stern, about two inches diameter.

"Them two holes was made from within, for the splinters showed outside.

"She was a good ship, and met with no stress of weather to speak of, on that voyage.

"Joe Wylie scuttled her, and destroyed her people.

"D—n his eyes!"

Mr. Hazel was shocked at this finale; but he knew what sailors are, and how little meaning there is in their set phrases. However, as a clergyman, he could not allow these to be Cooper's last words; so he said earnestly, "Yes, but, my poor fellow, you said you forgave all your enemies. We all need forgiveness, you know."

"That is true, sir."

"And you forgive this Wylie, do you not?"

"O Lord yes," said Cooper, faintly. "I forgive the lubber; d—n him!"

Having said these words with some difficulty, he became lethargic, and so remained for two hours. Indeed he spoke but once more, and that was to Welch; though they were all about him then. "Messmate," said he, in a voice that was now faint and broken, "you and I must sail together on this new voyage. I'm going out of port first; but" (in a whisper of inconceivable tenderness and simple cunning) "I'll lie to outside the harbor till you come out, my boy." Then he paused a moment. Then he added, softly, "For I love you, Tom."

These sweet words were the last of that rugged, silent sailor, who never threw a word away, and whose rough breast inclosed a friendship as of the ancient world, tender, true, and everlasting: that sweetened his life and ennobled his death. As he deserved mourners, so he had true ones. His last words went home to the afflicted hearts that heard them, and the lady and gentleman, whose lives he had saved at cost of his own, wept aloud over their departed friend. But his messmate's eye was dry. When all was over, he just turned to the mourners, and said gravely, "Thank ye, sir: thank ye kindly, ma'am." And then he covered the body decently with the spare canvas, and lay quietly down with his own head pillowed upon those loved remains.

Towards afternoon, seals were observed sporting on the waters; but no attempt was made to capture them. Indeed, Miss Rolleston had quite enough to do to sail the boat with Mr. Hazel's assistance.

The night passed, and the morning brought nothing new; except that they fell in with sea-weed in such quantities the boat could hardly get through it.

Mr. Hazel examined this sea-weed carefully, and brought several kinds upon deck. Among the varieties, was one like thin green strips of spinach, very tender and succulent. His botanical researches included sea-weed, and he recognized this as one of the edible rock-weeds.

There was very little of it comparatively, but he took great pains, and, in two hours' time, had gathered as much as might fill a good slop-basin.

He washed it in fresh water, and then asked Miss Rolleston for a pocket-handkerchief. This he tied so as to make a bag, and contrived to boil it with a few chips of fuel that remained on board.

After he had boiled it ten minutes, there was no more fuel, except a bowl or two, and the boat-hook, one pair of oars, and the mid-ship and stern thwarts.

He tasted it, and found it glutinous and delicious; he gave Miss Rolleston some, and then fed Welch with the rest. He, poor fellow, enjoyed this sea spinach greatly; he could no longer swallow meat.

While Hazel was feeding him, a flock of ducks passed over their heads, high in the air.

Welch pointed up at them.

"Ah!" said Helen, "if we had but their wings!"

Presently a bird was seen coming in the same direction, but flying very low; it wobbled along towards them very slowly, and at last, to their great surprise, came flapping and tried to settle on the gunwale of the boat. Welch, with that instinct of slaughter which belongs to men, struck the boat-hook into the bird's back, and it was soon dispatched. It proved to be one of that very flock of ducks that had passed over their heads, and a crab was found fastened to its leg. It is supposed that the bird, to break its long flight, had rested on some reef, and, perhaps, been too busy fishing and, caught this Tartar.

Hazel pounced upon it. "Heaven has sent this for you, because you can not eat turtle." But the next moment he blushed and recovered his reason. "See," said he, referring to her own words, "this poor bird had wings, yet death overtook her."

He sacrificed a bowl for fuel, and boiled the duck and the crab in one pot, and Miss Rolleston ate demurely but plentifully of both. Of the crab's shell he made a little drinking-vessel for Miss Rolleston.

Cooper remained without funeral rites all this time; the reason was that Welch lay with his head pillowed upon his dead friend, and Hazel had not the heart to disturb him.

But it was the survivors' duty to commit him to the deep, and so Hazel sat down by Welch, and asked him kindly whether he would not wish the services of the Church to be read over his departed friend.

"In course, sir," said Welch. But the next moment he took Hazel's meaning, and said hurriedly, "No, no; I can't let Sam be buried in the sea. Ye see, sir, Sam and I, we are used to one another, and I can't abide to part with him, alive or dead."

"Ah!" said Hazel, "the best friends must part when death takes one."

"Ay, ay, when t'other lives. But, Lord bless you, sir! I sha'n't be long astarn of my messmate here; can't you see that?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Hazel, surprised and alarmed. "Why, you are not mortally wounded as Cooper was. Have a good heart, man, and we three will all see Old England yet."

"Well, sir," said Welch, coolly, "I'll tell ye; me and my shipmate, Prince, was a cutting at one another with our knives a smart time (and I do properly wonder, when I think of that day's work, for I liked the man well enough, but rum atter of starvation plays hell with seafaring men), well, sir, as I was a saying, he let more blood out of me than I could afford to lose under the circumstances. And, ye see, I can't make fresh blood, because my throat is so swelled by the drought, I can't swallow much meat, so I'm safe to lose the number of my mess; and, another thing, my heart isn't altogether set towards living. Sam, here, he give me an order; what, didn't

ye hear him? 'I'll lie to outside the bar,' says he 'till you come out.' He expects me to come out in his wake. Don't ye, Sam—that was?" and he laid his hand gently on the remains. "Now, sir, I shall ax the lady and you a favor. I want to lie alongside Sam. But if you bury him in the sea, and me ashore, d—n my eyes if I sha'n't be a thousand years or so before I can find my own messmate. Eternity is a nation big place, I'm told, a hundred times as big as both oceans. No, sir; you'll make land, by Sam's reckoning, to-morrow or next day, wind and tide permitting. I'll take care of Sam's hull till then, and we'll lie together, till the angel blows that there trumpet; and then we'll go aloft together, and, as soon as ever we have made our scrape to our betters, we'll both speak a good word for you and the lady, and a very pretty lady she is, and a good-hearted, and the best plucked one I ever did see in any distressed craft; now don't ye cry, miss, don't ye cry, your trouble is pretty near over; he said you was not a hundred miles from land; I don't know how he knew that, he was always a better seaman than I be; but say it he did, and that is enough, for he was a man as never told a lie, nor wasted a word."

Welch could utter no more just then; for the glands of his throat were swollen, and he spoke with considerable difficulty.

What could Hazel reply? The judgment is sometimes ashamed to contradict the heart with cold reasons.

He only said, with a sigh, that he saw no signs of land, and believed they had gone on a wrong course, and were in the heart of the Pacific.

Welch made no answer, but a look of good-natured contempt. The idea of this parson contradicting Sam Cooper!

The sun broke, and revealed the illimitable ocean; themselves a tiny speck on it.

Mr. Hazel whispered Miss Rolleston that Cooper *must* be buried to-day.

At ten P.M. they passed through more seaweed; but this time they had to eat the sea-spinach raw, and there was very little of it.

At noon, the sea was green in places.

Welch told them this was a sign they were nearing land.

At four P.M. a bird, about the size and color of a woodpecker, settled on the boat's mast.

Their glittering eyes fastened on it; and Welch said, "Come, there's a supper for you as can eat it."

"No, poor thing!" said Helen Rolleston.

"You are right," said Hazel, with a certain effort of self-restraint. "Let our sufferings make us gentle, not savage: that poor bird is lost like us upon this ocean. It is a land-bird."

"How do you know?"

"Water-birds have webbed feet,—to swim with." The bird, having rested, flew to the north-west.

Helen, by one of those inspired impulses her sex have, altered the boat's course directly, and followed the bird.

Half an hour before sunset, Helen Rolleston, whose vision was very keen, said she saw something at the verge of the horizon, like a hair standing upright.

Hazel looked, but could not see any thing.

In ten minutes more, Helen Rolleston pointed

it out again; and then Hazel did see a vertical line, more like a ship's mast than any thing else one could expect to see there.

Their eyes were now strained to make it out, and, as the boat advanced, it became more and more palpable, though it was hard to say exactly what it was.

Five minutes before the sun set, the air being clearer than ever, it stood out clean against the sky. A tree,—a lofty, solitary tree; with a tall stem, like a column, and branches only at the top.

A palm-tree—in the middle of the Pacific.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AND but for the land-bird which rested on their mast, and for their own mercy in sparing it, they would have passed to the eastward, and never seen that giant palm-tree in mid-ocean.

"Oh, let us put out all our sails, and fly to it!" cried Helen.

Welch smiled and said, "No, miss, ye mustn't. Lord love ye; what! run on to a land ye don't know, happy go lucky, in the dark, like that? Lay her head for the tree, and welcome, but you must lower the mainsail, and treble-reef the foresail; and so creep on a couple of knots an hour, and, by daybreak, you'll find the island close under your lee. Then you can look out for a safe landing-place."

"The island, Mr. Welch!" said Helen. "There is no island, or I should have seen it."

"Oh, the island was hull down. Why, you don't think as palm-trees grow in the water? You do as I say, or you'll get wrecked on some thundering reef or other."

Upon this Mr. Hazel and Miss Rolleston set to work, and with considerable difficulty lowered the mainsail, and treble-reefed the foresail.

"That is right," said Welch. "To-morrow you'll land in safety, and bury my messmate and me."

"Oh, no!" cried Helen Rolleston. "We must bury him, but we mean to cure you." They obeyed Welch's instructions, and so crept on all night; and, so well had this able seaman calculated distance and rate of sailing, that, when the sun rose, sure enough there was an island under their lee, distant about a league, though it looked much less. But the palm-tree was more than twice that distance. Owing to wind and current they had made lee-way all night, and that tree stood on the most westerly point of the island.

Hazel and Miss Rolleston stood up and hurried for joy; then fell on their knees in silent gratitude. Welch only smiled.

But the breeze had freshened, and, though there were no great waves at sea, yet breakers, formidable to such a craft as theirs, were seen foaming over long disjointed reefs ahead, that grinned black and dangerous here and there.

They then consulted Welch, and he told them they must tack directly, and make a circuit of the island; he had to show them how to tack; and, the sea rising, they got thoroughly wetted, and Miss Rolleston rather frightened; for here was a peril they had wonderfully escaped hitherto.

However, before eleven o'clock, they had stood out to sea, and coasted the whole south side of the island: they then put the boat before the wind, and soon ran past the east coast, which was very narrow—in fact, a sort of bluff-head—and got on the north side of the island. Here the water was comparatively smooth, and the air warm and balmy. They ranged along the coast at about a mile's distance, looking out for a good landing.

Here was no longer an unbroken line of cliffs, but an undulating coast, with bulging rocks, and lines of reef. After a mile or two of that the coast ran out seaward, and they passed close to a most extraordinary phenomenon of vegetation. Great tangled woods crowned the shore and the landward slopes, and their grand foliage seemed to flow over into the sea: for here was a broad rocky flat, intersected with a thousand little channels of the sea; and the thousand little islets so formed were crowded, covered, and hidden with luxuriant vegetation. Huge succulent leaves of the richest hue hung over the water, and some of the most adventurous showed, by the crystals that sparkled on their green surface, that the waves had actually been kissing them at high tide. This ceased, and they passed under a cliff, wooded nearly to the point.

This cliff was broad and irregular, and in one of its cavities a cascade of pure fresh water came sparkling, leaping, and tumbling down to the foot of the rock. There it had formed a great basin of water, cool, deep, transparent, which trickled over on to a tongue of pink sand, and went in two crystal gutters to the sea.

Great and keen was the rapture this sight caused our poor parched voyagers; and eager their desire to land at once, if possible, and plunge their burning lips, and swelling throats, and fevered hands, into that heavenly liquid; but the next moment they were diverted from that purpose by the scene that burst on them.

This wooded cliff, with its wonderful cascade, was the very gate of paradise. They passed it, and in one moment were in a bay,—a sudden bay, wonderfully deep for its extent, and sheltered on three sides. Broad sands with rainbow tints, all sparkling, and dotted with birds, some white as-snow, some gorgeous. A peaceful sea of exquisite blue kissing these lovely sands with myriad dimples; and, from the land side, soft emerald slopes, embroidered with silver threads of water, came to the very edge of the sands; so that, from all those glorious hues, that flecked the prismatic and sparkling sands, the eye of the voyagers passed at once to the vivid, yet sweet and soothing, green of Nature; and over this paradise the breeze they could no longer feel wafted spicy but delicate odors from unseen trees.

Even Welch raised himself in the boat, and sniffed the heavenly air, and smiled at the heavenly spot. "Here's a blessed haven!" said he. "Down sail, and row her ashore."

CHAPTER XXV.

THEY rowed more than a mile, so deep was the glorious bay; and then their oars struck the ground. But Hazel with the boat-hook pro-

pelled the boat gently over the pellucid water, that now seemed too shallow to float a canoe: and at last looked like the mere varnish of that picture, the prismatic sands below; yet still the little craft glided over it, till it gently grazed the soft sand, and was stationary. So placidly ended that terrible voyage.

Mr. Hazel and Miss Rolleston were on shore in a moment, and it was all they could do not to fall upon the land and kiss it.

Never had the sea disgorged upon that fairy isle such ghastly spectres. They looked, not like people about to die, but that had died, and been buried, and just come out of their graves to land on that blissful shore. We should have started back with horror; but the birds of that virgin isle merely stepped out of their way, and did not fly.

They had landed in paradise.

Even Welch yielded to that universal longing men have to embrace the land after perils at sea, and was putting his leg slowly over the gunwale, when Hazel came back to his assistance. He got ashore, but was contented to sit down with his eyes on the dimpled sea and the boat, waiting quietly till the tide should float his friend to his feet again.

The sea-birds walked quietly about him, and minded him not.

Miss Rolleston ascended a green slope very slowly, for her limbs were cramped, and was lost to view.

Hazel now went up the beach, and took a more minute survey of the neighborhood.

The west side of the bay was varied. Half of it presented the soft character that marked the bay in general; but a portion of it was rocky, though streaked with vegetation, and this part was intersected by narrow clefts, into which, in some rare tempests and high tides combined, tongues of the sea had entered, licking the sides of the gullies smooth; and these occasional visits were marked by the sand and broken shells and other *débris* the tempestuous and encroaching sea had left behind.

The true high-water mark was several feet lower than these *débris*, and was clearly marked. On the land above the cliffs he found a tangled jungle of tropical shrubs, into which he did not penetrate, but skirted it, and, walking eastward, came out upon a delicious down or grassy slope, that faced the centre of the bay. It was a gentleman's lawn of a thousand acres, with an extremely gentle slope from the centre of the island down to the sea.

A river flowing from some distant source ran eastward through this down, but at its verge, and almost encircled it. Hazel traversed the lawn until this river, taking a sudden turn towards the sea, intercepted him at a spot which he immediately fixed on as Helen Rolleston's future residence.

Four short, thick, umbrageous trees stood close to the stream on this side, and on the eastern side was a grove of gigantic palm-trees, at whose very ankles the river ran. Indeed, it had undermined one of these palm-trees, and that giant at this moment lay all across the stream, leaving a gap through which Hazel's eye could pierce to a great depth among those grand columns; for they stood wide apart, and there was not a vestige of brushwood, jungle, or even grass, below their

enormous crowns. He christened the place St. Helen's on the spot.

He now dipped his baler into the stream, and found it pure and tolerably cool.

He followed the bend of the stream; it evaded the slope and took him by its own milder descent to the sands: over these it flowed smooth as glass into the sea.

Hazel ran to Welch to tell him all he had discovered, and to give him his first water from the island.

He found a roan-colored pigeon, with a purplish neck, perched on the sick man's foot. The bird shone like a rainbow, and cocked a saucy eye at Hazel, and flew up into the air a few yards, but it soon appeared that fear had little to do with this movement; for, after an airy circle or two, he fanned Hazel's cheek with his fast-flapping wings, and lighted on the very edge of the baler, and was for sipping.

"Oh, look here, Welch!" cried Hazel, in an ecstacy of delight.

"Ay, sir," said he. "Poor things, they hain't a found us out yet."

The talking puzzled the bird, if it did not alarm him, and he flew up to the nearest tree, and, perching there, inspected these new and noisy bipeds at his leisure.

Hazel now laid his hand on Welch's shoulder and reminded him gently they had a sad duty to perform, which could not be postponed.

"Right you are, sir," said Welch, "and very kind of you to let me have my way with him. Poor Sam!"

"I have found a place," said Hazel, in a low voice. "We can take the boat close to it. But where is Miss Rolleston?"

"Oh, she is not far off; she was here just now, and brought me this here little cocoa-nut, and patted me on the back, she did, then off again on a cruise. Bless her little heart!"

Hazel and Welch then got into the boat, and pushed off without much difficulty, and punted across the bay to one of those clefts we have indicated. It was now nearly high water, and they moored the boat close under the cleft Hazel had selected.

Then they both got out and went up to the extremity of the cleft, and there, with the axe and with pieces of wood, they scraped out a resting-place for Cooper. This was light work; for it was all stones, shells, fragments of coral, and dried seaweed, lying loosely together. But now came a hard task in which Welch could not assist. Hazel unshipped a thwart, and laid the body on it: then by a great effort staggered with the burden up to the grave and deposited it. He was exhausted by the exertion, and had to sit down panting for some time. As soon as he was recovered, he told Welch to stand at the head of the grave, and he stood at the foot, bare-headed, and then, from memory, he repeated the service of our Church, hardly missing or displacing a word.

This was no tame recital; the scene, the circumstances, the very absence of the book, made it tender and solemn. And then Welch repeated those beautiful words after Hazel, and Hazel let him. And how did he repeat them? In such a hearty, loving tone, as became one who was about to follow, and all this but a short leave-taking. So uttered, for the living as well as the

dead, those immortal words had a strange significance and beauty.

And presently a tender, silvery voice came down to mingle with the deep and solemn tones of the male mourners. It was Helen Rolleston. She had watched most of their movements unseen herself, and now, standing at the edge of the ravine, and looking down on them, uttered a soft but thrilling amen to every prayer. When it was over, and the men prepared to fill in the grave, she spoke to Welch in an under-tone, and begged leave to pay her tribute first; and, with this, she detached her apron, and held it out to them. Hazel easily climbed up to her, and found her apron was full of sweet-smelling bark and aromatic leaves, whose fragrance filled the air.

"I want you to strew these over his poor remains," she said. "Oh, not common earth! He saved our lives. And his last words were, 'I love you, Tom.' Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!" And with that she gave him the apron, and turned her head away to hide her tears.

Hazel blessed her for the thought, which, indeed, none but a lady would have had; and Welch and he, with the tears in their eyes, strewed the spicy leaves first: and soon a ridge of shingle neatly bound with sea-weed marked the sailor's grave.

Hazel's next anxiety, and that a pressing one, was to provide shelter for the delicate girl and the sick man, whom circumstances had placed under his care. He told Miss Rolleston Welch and he were going to cross the bay again, and would she be good enough to meet them at the bend of the river where she would find four trees? She nodded her head and took that road accordingly. Hazel rowed eastward across the bay, and, it being now high water, he got the boat into the river itself near the edge of the shore, and, as this river had worn a channel, he contrived with the boat-hook to propel the boat up the stream to an angle in the bank within forty yards of the four trees. He could get no farther, the stream being now not only shallow, but blocked here and there with great and rough fragments of stone. Hazel pushed the boat into the angle out of the current, and moored her fast. He and Welch then got ashore, and Miss Rolleston was standing at the four trees. He went to her and said enthusiastically, "This is to be your house. Is it not a beautiful site?"

"Yes, it is a beautiful site, but—forgive me—I really don't see the house," was her reply.

"But you see the frame-work."

Helen looked all about, and then said, ruefully, "I suppose I am blind, sir, or else you are dreaming, for I see nothing at all."

"Why, here's a roof ready made, and the frame of a wall. We have only to wattle a screen between these four uprights."

"Only to wattle a screen! But I don't know what wattling a screen is. Who does?"

"Why, you get some of the canes that grow a little farther up the river, and a certain long wiry grass I have marked down, and then you fix and weave till you make a screen from tree to tree; this could be patched with wet clay; I know where there is plenty of that. Meantime see what is done to our hands. The crown of this great palm-tree lies at the southern aperture of

your house, and blocks it entirely up; that will keep off the only cold wind, the south wind, from you to-night. Then look at these long, spiky leaves interlaced over your head. (These trees are screw-pines.) There is a roof ready made. You must have another roof underneath that, but it will do for a day or two."

"But you will wattle the screen directly," said Helen. "Begin at once, please. I am anxious to see a screen wattled."

"Well," said Welch, who had joined them, "landsmen are queer folk, the best of 'em. Why, miss, it would take him a week to screen you with rushes and reeds, and them sort of weeds; and I'd do it in half an hour, if I was the Tom Welch I used to be. Why, there's spare canvas enough in the boat to go between these four trees breast high, and then there's the foresel besides; the mainsel is all you and me shall want, sir."

"Oh, excuse me," said Miss Rolleston, "I will not be sheltered at the expense of my friends."

"Welch, you are a trump," said Hazel, and ran off for the spare canvas. He brought it and the carpenter's basket of tools. They went to work, and Miss Rolleston insisted on taking part in it. Finding her so disposed, Hazel said that they had better divide their labors, since the time was short. Accordingly he took the axe and chopped off a great many scales of the palm-tree, and lighted a great fire between the trees, while the other two worked on the canvas.

"This is to dry the soil as well as cook our provisions," said he; "and now I must go and find food. Is there anything you fancy?" He turned his head from the fire he was lighting and addressed this question both to Welch and Miss Rolleston.

Miss Rolleston stared at this question, then smiled, and, in the true spirit of a lady, said, "I think I should like a good large cocoa-nut, if you can find one." She felt sure there was no other eatable thing in the whole island.

"I wants a cabbage," said Welch, in a loud voice.

"Oh, Mr. Welch, we are not at home," said Miss Rolleston, blushing at the preposterous demand.

"No, miss, in Capericorn. Whereby we sha'n't have to pay nothing for this here cabbage. I'll tell ye, miss: when a sailor comes ashore he always goes in for green vegetables, for why, he has eaten so much junk and biscuit, nature sings out for greens. Me and my shipmates was paid off at Portsmouth last year, and six of us agreed to dine together and each order his dish. Blest if six boiled legs of mutton did not come up smoking hot: three was with cabbage, and three with turmots. Mine was with turmots. But them I don't ask, so nigh the Line; don't ye go to think, because I'm sick, and the lady and you is so kind to me, and to him that is a waiting outside them there shoals for me, as I'm unreasonable; turmots I wish you both, and plenty of 'em, when some whaler gets driven out of her course and picks you up, and carries you into northern latitudes where turmots grow; but cabbage is my right, cabbage is my due, being paid off in a manner; for the ship is foundered and I'm ashore: cabbage I ask for, as a seaman that has dune his duty, and a man that won't live to eat many more of 'em; and" (losing his temper) "if you are the man I take you for, you'll run and fetch

me a cabbage fresh from the tree" (recovering his temper). "I know I didn't ought to ax a parson to shin up a tree for me: but Lord bless you, there ain't no sarcy little boys a looking on, and here's a poor fellow mostly dying for it."

Miss Rolleston looked at Mr. Hazel with alarm in every feature, and whispered, "Cabbage from the tree. Is he wandering?"

Hazel smiled. "No," said he. "He has picked up a fable of these seas, that there is a tree which grows cabbages."

Welch heard him, and said, with due warmth, "Of course there is a tree on all these islands that grows cabbages; that was known a hundred years before you was born, and shipmates of mine have eaten them."

"Excuse me, what those old Admirals and Buccaneers, that set the legend afloat, were so absurd as to call a cabbage, and your shipmates may have eaten for one, is nothing on earth but the last year's growth of the palm-tree."

"Palm-tree be —," said Welch; and thereupon ensued a hot argument, which Helen's good sense cut short.

"Mr. Hazel," said she, "can you by any possibility get our poor friend the *thing* he wants?"

"Oh, that is quite within the bounds of possibility," said Hazel, dryly.

"Well, then, suppose you begin by getting him the *thing*. Then I will boil the *thing*, and he will eat the *thing*; and after all that it will be time to argue about the *name* we shall give to the *thing*."

The good sense of this struck Mr. Hazel forcibly. He started off at once, armed with the axe, and a net bag Welch had made since he became unfit for heavy labor: he called back to them as he went to put the pots on.

Welch and Miss Rolleston complied; and then the sailor showed the lady how to sew sailor-wise, driving the large needle with the palm of the hand, guarded by a piece of leather. They had nailed two breadths of canvas to the trees on the north and west sides, and run the breadths rapidly together; and the water was boiling and bubbling in the balers, when Miss Rolleston uttered a scream, for Hazel came running over the prostrate palm-tree as if it was a proper bridge, and lighted in the midst of them.

"Lot one," said he cheerfully, and produced from his net some limes, two cocoa-nuts, and a land-turtle: from this last esculent Miss Rolleston withdrew with undisguised horror, and it was in vain he assured her it was a great delicacy.

"No matter: it is a reptile. Oh, please send it away."

"The Queen of the Island reprieves you," said he, and put down the terrapin, which went off very leisurely for a reprieved reptile.

Then Hazel produced a fine bream, which he had found struggling in a rock-pool, the tide having turned, and three sea crayfish, bigger than any lobster. He chopped their heads off outside, and threw their tails into the pots; he stuck a piece of pointed wood through the bream, and gave it to Welch to toast; but Welch waved it aside.

"I see no cabbage," said he, grimly.

"Oh, I forgot: but that is soon found," said Hazel. "Here, give me the fish, and you take the saw, and examine the head of this palm-tree, which lies at Miss Rolleston's door. Saw away

the succulent part of last year's growth, and bring it here."

Welch got up slowly.

"I'll go with you, Mr. Welch," said Miss Rolleston.

She will not be alone with me for a moment, if she can help it, thought Hazel, and sat moody by the fire. But he shook off his sadness, and forced on a cheerful look the moment they came back. They brought with them a vegetable very like the heart of a cabbage, only longer and whiter.

"There," said Welch, "what d'y'e call that?"

"The last year's growth of the palm," said Hazel, calmly.

This vegetable was cut in two and put into the pots.

"There, take the toasting-fork again," said Hazel to Welch, and drew out from his net three huge scallop-shells. "Soup - plates," said he, and washed them in the running stream: then put them before the fire to dry.

While the fish and vegetable were cooking, he went and cut off some of the leafy, pinnated branches of the palm-tree, and fastened them horizontally above the strips of canvas. Each palm-branch traversed a whole side of the bower. This closed the northern and western sides.

On the southern side, the prostrate palm-tree, on striking the ground, had so crushed its boughs and leaves together as to make a thick wall of foliage.

Then he took to making forks; and primitive ones they were. He selected a bough the size of a thick walking-stick; sawed it off the tree: sawed a piece six inches long off it, peeled that, split it in four, and, with his knife, gave each piece three points, by merely tapering off and serrating one end; and so he made a fork a minute. Then he brought all the rugs and things from the boat, and, the ground being now thoroughly dried by the fire, placed them for seats; gave each person a large leaf for a plate, besides a scallop-shell; and served out supper. It was eaten with rare appetite; the palm-tree vegetable in particular was delicious, tasting between a cabbage and a cocoa-nut.

When they had supped, Hazel removed the plates and went to the boat. He returned, dragging the foremast and foresail, which were small, and called Welch out. They agreed to rig the mainsail tarpaulin-wise and sleep in the boat. Accordingly they made themselves very busy screening the east side of Miss Rolleston's new abode with the foresail, and fastened a loop and drove a nail into the tree, and looped the sail to it, then suddenly bade her good-night in cheerful tones, and were gone in a moment, leaving her to her repose, as they imagined. Hazel in particular, having used all his ingenuity to secure her personal comfort, was now too bent on showing her the most delicate respect and forbearance to think of any thing else. But, justly counting on the delicacy, he had forgotten the timidity of her sex, and her first night in the island was a terribly trying one.

Thrice she opened her mouth to call Welch and Hazel back, but could not. Yet, when their footsteps were out of hearing, she would have given the world to have them between her and the perils with which she felt herself surrounded.

Tigers; Snakes; Scorpions; Savages! what would become of her during the long night?

She sat and cowered before the hot embers. She listened to what seemed the angry roar of the sea. What with the stillness of the night and her sharpened senses she heard it all round the island. She seemed environed with peril, and yet surrounded by desolation. No one at hand to save her in time from a wild beast. No one anywhere near except a sick sailor and one she would almost rather die than call singly to her aid, for he had once told her he loved her.

"Oh, papa! oh, Arthur!" she cried, "are you praying for your poor Helen?" Then she wept and prayed; and half nerved herself to bear the worst. Finally, her vague fears completely overmastered her. Then she had recourse to a stratagem that belongs to her sex—she hid herself from the danger, and the danger from her: she covered herself face and all, and so lay trembling, and longing for the day.

At the first streak of dawn she fled from her place of torture, and after plunging her face and hands in the river, which did her a world of good, she went off, and entered the jungle, and searched it closely, so far as she could penetrate it. Soon she heard "Miss Rolleston" called in anxious tones. But she tossed her little head, and revenged herself for her night of agony by not replying.

However, Nature took her in hand: imperious hunger drew her back to her late place of torture; and there she found a fire, and Hazel cooking crayfish. She ate the crayfish heartily, and drank cocoa-nut milk out of half a cocoa-nut, which the ingenious Hazel had already sawn, polished, and mounted for her.

After that, Hazel's whole day was occupied in stripping a tree that stood on the high western promontory of the bay, and building up the materials of a bonfire a few yards from it, that, if any whaler should stray that way, they might not be at a loss for means to attract her attention.

Welch was very ill all day, and Miss Rolleston nursed him. He got about towards evening, and Miss Rolleston asked him, rather timidly, if he could put her up a bell-rope.

"Why, yes, miss," said Welch, "that is easy enough; but I don't see no bell."

Oh, she did not want a bell—she only wanted a bell-rope.

Hazel came up, during this conversation, and she then gave her reason.

"Because, then, if Mr. Welch is ill in the night, and wants me, I could come to him. Or—" finding herself getting near the real reason she stopped short.

"Or what?" inquired Hazel, eagerly.

She replied to Welch. "When tigers and things come to me, I can let you know, Mr. Welch, if you have any curiosity about the result of their visit."

"Tigers!" said Hazel, in answer to this side slap: "there are no tigers here; no large animals of prey exist in the Pacific."

"What makes you think that?"

"It is notorious; naturalists are agreed."

"But I am not. I heard noises all night. And little I expected that any thing of me would be left this morning, except, *perhaps*, my back hair. Mr. Welch, you are clever at rigging things,—that is what you call it,—and so please rig me a bell-

rope, then I shall not be eaten alive without creating some *little* disturbance."

"I'll do it miss," said Welch, "this very night."

Hazel said nothing, but pondered. Accordingly, that very evening a piece of stout twine, with a stone at the end of it, hung down from the roof of Helen's house; and this twine clove the air, until it reached a ring upon the mainmast of the cutter; thence it descended, and was to be made fast to something or somebody. The young lady inquired no further. The very sight of this bell-rope was a great comfort to her; it reunited her to civilized life.

That night she lay down, and quaked considerably less. Yet she woke several times; and an hour before daylight she heard distinctly a noise that made her flesh creep. It was like the snoring of some great animals. This horrible sound was faint and distant; but she heard it between the roll of the waves, and that showed it was not the sea roaring; she hid herself in her rugs, and cowered till daybreak. A score of times she was minded to pull her bell-rope; but always a womanly feeling, strong as her love of life, withheld her. "Time to pull that bell-rope when the danger was present or imminent," she thought to herself. "The Thing will come smelling about before it attacks me, and then I will pull the bell;" and so she passed an hour of agony.

Next morning, at daybreak, Hazel met her just issuing from her hut, and pointing to his net told her he was going to forage; and would she be good enough to make the fire and have boiling water ready? he was sorry to trouble her, but poor Welch was worse this morning. Miss Rolleston cut short his excuses. "Pray do not take me for a child; of course I will light the fire, and boil the water. Only I have no lucifer matches."

"Here are two," said he. "I carry the box wrapped in oil-skin: for if any thing happen to *them*, Heaven help us."

He crossed the prostrate palm-tree, and dived into the wood. It was a large beautiful wood, and, except at the western edge, the trees were all of the palm-tree genus, but contained several species, including the cocoa-nut tree. The turf ran under these trees for about forty yards, and then died gradually away under the same thick shade which destroyed all other vegetation in this wood, and made it so easy to see and travel.

He gathered a few cocoa-nuts that had burst out of their ripe pods and fallen to the ground; and ran on till he reached a belt of trees and shrubs, that bounded the palm forest. Here his progress was no longer easy: but he found trees covered with a small fruit resembling quinces in every particular, of look, taste, and smell, and that made him persevere, since it was most important to learn the useful products of the island. Presently he burst through some brushwood into a swampy bottom surrounded by low trees, and instantly a dozen large birds of the osprey kind rose flapping into the air like windmills rising. He was quite startled by the whirring and flapping, and not a little amazed at the appearance of the place. Here was a very charnel-house; so thick lay the shells, skeletons, and loose bones of fish. Here too he found three terrapin killed but not eaten: and also some fish, more or less

pecked. "Aha! my worthy executioners, much obliged," said he: "you have saved me that job:" and into the bag went the terrapin, and two plump fish, but slightly mutilated. Before he had gone many yards, back came the sailing wings, and the birds settled again before his eyes. The rest of the low wood was but thin, and he soon emerged upon the open country; but it was most unpromising; and fitter for geese than men: a vast sedge swamp, with water in the middle, thin fringes of great fern-trees, and here and there a disconsolate tree like a weeping-willow, and at the end of this lake and swamp, which all together formed a triangle, was a barren hill without a blade of vegetation on it, and a sort of jagged summit, volcanic! Hazel did not at all like the look of.

Somewhat dismayed at finding so large a slice of the island worthless, he returned through the wood, guiding himself due west by his pocket-compass, and so got down to the shore, where he found scallops and crayfish in incredible abundance. Literally, he had only to go into the water and gather them. But "enough" is as good as "a feast." He ran to the pots with his miscellaneous bag, and was not received according to his deserts. Miss Rolleston told him, a little severely, the water had been boiling a long time. Then he produced his provender, by way of excuse.

"Tortoises again!" said she, and shuddered visibly.

But the quinces and cocoa-nuts were graciously received. Welch, however, cried out for cabbage.

"What am I to do?" said Hazel. "For every such cabbage a king must die."

"Goodness me!"

"A monarch of the grove."

"Oh, a King Log. Why, then, down with them all, of course; sooner than dear Mr. Welch shall go without his cabbage."

He cast a look of admiration on her, which she avoided, and very soon his axe was heard ringing in the wood hard by. Then came a loud crash. Then another. Hazel came running with the cabbage, and a cocoa-pod. "There," said he, "and there are a hundred more about. Whilst you cook that for Welch, I will store them." Accordingly he returned to the wood with his net, and soon came back with five pods in it, each as big as a large pumpkin.

He chucked these one at a time across the river, and then went for more. It took him all the afternoon to get all the pods across the river. He was obliged to sit down and rest.

But a suggestion of Helen's soon set him to work again.

"You were kind enough to say you would store these for me. Could you not store them so as to wall out those terrible beasts with them?"

"What terrible beasts?"

"That roar so all night, and don't eat us, only because they have not found out we are here yet. But they will."

"I deny their existence," said Hazel. "But I'll wall them out all the same," said he.

"Pray do," said Helen. "Wall them out first, and disprove them afterwards; I shall be better able to believe they don't exist, when they are well walled out,—much."

Hazel went to work, and with her assistance

laid cocoa-pods two wide and three deep, outside the northern and western sides of her leafy bower, and he promised to complete the walls by the same means in two days more.

They all then supped together, and, to oblige him, she ate a little of the terrapin, and, when they parted for the night, she thanked him, and said, with a deep blush, "You have been a good friend to me—of late."

He colored high, and his eyes sparkled with delight; and she noticed, and almost wished she had kept her gratitude to herself.

That night, what with her bell-rope and her little bit of a wall, she was somewhat less timorous, and went to sleep early.

But even in sleep she was watchful, and she was awakened by a slight sound in the neighborhood of the boat.

She lay watching, but did not stir.

Presently she heard a footstep.

With a stifled cry she bounded up, and her first impulse was to rush out of the tent. But she conquered this, and, gliding to the south side of her bower, she peered through the palm-leaves, and the first thing she saw was the figure of a man standing between her and the boat.

She drew her breath hard. The outline of the man was somewhat indistinct. But it was not a savage: the man was clothed; and his stature betrayed him.

He stood still for some time. "He is listening to see if I am awake," said Helen to herself.

The figure moved towards her bower.

Then all in a moment she became another woman. She did not rely on her bell-rope; she felt it was fast to nothing that could help her. She looked round for no weapon; she trusted to herself. She drew herself hastily up, and folded her arms; her bosom panted, but her cheek never paled. Her modesty was alarmed; her blood was up, and life or death were nothing to her.

The footsteps came nearer; they stopped at her door; they went north; they came back south. They kept her in this high-wrought attitude for half an hour. Then they retired softly; and, when they were gone, she gave way, and fell on her knees, and began to cry hysterically. Then she got calmer, and then she wondered and puzzled herself; but she slept no more that night.

In the morning she found that the fire was lighted on a sort of shelf close to the boat. Mr. Hazel had cut the shelf and lighted the fire there for Welch's sake, who had complained of cold in the night.

Whilst Hazel was gone for the crayfish, Welch asked Helen to go for her prayer-book. She brought it directly, and turned the leaves to find the prayers for the sick. But she was soon undeceived as to his intention.

"Sam had it wrote down how the Proserpine was foundered, and I should like to lie alongside my messmate on that there paper, as well as in t'other place" (meaning the grave). "Begin as Sam did, that this is my last word."

"Oh, I hope not. Oh, Mr. Welch, pray do not leave me!"

"Well, well then, never mind that; but just put down as I heard Sam; and his dying words, that the parson took down, were the truth."

"I have written that."

"And that the two holes was on her port side, and seven foot from her stern-post; and I say them very augers that is in our cutter made them holes. Set down that."

"It is down."

"Then I'll put my mark under it; and you are my witness."

Helen, anxious to please him in every thing, showed him where to put his mark. He did so; and she signed her name as his witness.

"And now, Mr. Welch," said she, "do not you fret about the loss of the ship; you should rather think how good Providence has been to us in saving us three out of so many that sailed in that poor ship. That Wylie was a wicked man; but he is drowned, or starved, no doubt, and there is an end of him. You are alive, and we are all three to see Old England again. But to live, you must eat; and so now do pray make a good breakfast to-day. Tell me what you can fancy. A cabbage?"

"What, you own it is a cabbage?"

"Of course I do," said Helen, coaxing. "You must excuse Mr. Hazel; these learned men are so crochety in some things, and go by books; but you and I go by our senses, and to us a cabbage is a cabbage, grow where it will. Will you have one?"

"No, miss, not this morning. What I wants this morning very bad, indeed, it is,—I wants a drink made of the sweet-smelling leaves, like as you strewed over my messmate,—the Lord in heaven bless you for it."

"Oh, Mr. Welch, that is a curious fancy; but you shall not ask me twice for any thing; the jungle is full of them, and I'll fetch you some in five minutes. So you must boil the water."

She scudded away to the jungle, and soon returned with some aromatic leaves. Whilst they were infusing, Hazel came up, and, on being informed of Welch's fancy, made no opposition; but, on the contrary, said that such men had sometimes very happy inspirations. He tasted it, however, and said the smell was the best part of it in his opinion. He then put it aside to cool for the sick man's use.

They ate their usual breakfast, and then Welch sipped his spiced tea, as he called it. Morning and afternoon he drank copious draughts of it, and seemed to get suddenly better, and told them not to hang about him any longer; but go to their work: he was all right now.

To humor him they went off in different directions; Hazel with his axe to level cocoa-nut trees; and Helen to search for fruits in the jungle.

She came back in about an hour, very proud of some pods she had found with nutmegs inside them. She ran to Welch. He was not in the boat. She saw his waistcoat, however, folded and lying on the thwart: so she knew he could not be far off, and concluded he was in her bower. But he was not there; and she called to Mr. Hazel. He came to the side of the river laden with cocoa-nuts.

"Is he with you?" said Helen.

"Who? Welch? No."

"Well, then, he is not here. Oh dear! something is the matter.

Hazel came across directly. And they both began to run anxiously to every part whence they could command a view to any distance.

They could not see him anywhere, and met with blank faces at the bower.

Then Helen made a discovery.

This very day, while hanging about the place, Hazel had torn up from the edge of the river an old trunk, whose roots had been loosened by the water washing away the earth that held them, and this stump he had set up in her bower for a table, after sawing the roots down into legs. Well, on the smooth part of this table lay a little pile of money, a ring with a large pearl in it, and two gold earrings, Helen had often noticed in Welch's ears.

She pointed at these and turned pale. Then, suddenly waving her hand to Hazel to follow her, she darted out of the bower, and, in a moment, she was at the boat.

There she found, beside his waistcoat, his knife, and a little pile of money, placed carefully on the thwart; and, underneath it, his jacket rolled up, and his shoes and sailor's cap, all put neatly and in order.

Hazel found her looking at them. He began to have vague misgivings. "What does this mean?" he said, faintly.

"What does it mean!" cried Helen in agony. "Don't you see? A Legacy! The poor thing has divided his little all. Oh, my heart! What has become of him?" Then, with one of those inspirations her sex have, she cried, "Ah! Cooper's grave!"

Hazel, though not so quick as she was, caught her meaning at a word, and flew down the slope to the sea-shore. The tide was out: a long irregular track of footsteps indented the sand. He stopped a moment and looked at them. They pointed towards that cleft where the grave was. He followed them all across the sand. They entered the cleft, and did not return. Full of heavy foreboding, he rushed into the cleft.

Yes; his arms hanging on each side of the grave, and his cheek laid on it, there lay Tom Welch, with a loving smile on his dead face. Only a man; yet faithful as a dog.

Hazel went back slowly, and crying. Of all men living, he could best appreciate Fidelity, and mourn its fate.

But as he drew near Helen he dried his eyes; for it was his duty to comfort her.

She had at first endeavored to follow him; but after a few steps her knees smote together, and she was fain to sit down on the grassy slope that overlooked the sea.

The sun was setting huge and red over that vast and peaceful sea.

She put her hands to her head, and, sick at heart, looked heavily at that glorious and peaceful sight. Hazel came up to her. She looked at his face, and that look was enough for her. She rocked herself gently to and fro.

"Yes," said he, in a broken voice: "he was there—quite dead."

He sat gently down by her side, and looked at that setting sun and illimitable ocean, and his heart felt deadly sad. "He is gone—and we are alone—on this island."

The man said this in one sense only: but the woman heard it in more than one.

ALONE!

She glanced timidly round at him, and, without rising, edged a little away from him, and wept in silence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AFTER a long silence, Hazel asked her in a low voice if she could be there in half an hour. She said yes, in the same tone, but without turning her head. On reaching the graves, she found that Hazel had spared her a sad sight. Nothing remained but to perform the service. When it was over she went slowly away in deep distress on more accounts than one. In due course Hazel came to her bower, but she was not there. Then he lighted the fire, and prepared every thing for supper; and he was so busy, and her foot so light, he did not hear her come. But by-and-by, lifting his head, he saw her looking wistfully at him, as if she would read his soul in his minutest actions. He started and brightened all over with pleasure at the sudden sight of her, and said eagerly, "Your supper is quite ready."

"Thank you, sir," said she, sadly and coldly (she had noted that expression of joy), "I have no appetite; do not wait for me." And soon after strolled away again.

Hazel was dumfounded. There was no mistaking her manner; it was chilly and reserved all of a sudden. It wounded him; but he behaved like a man. "What! I keep her out of her own house, do I?" said he to himself. He started up, took a fish out of the pot, wrapped it in a leaf, and stalked off to his boat. Then he ate a little of the fish, threw the rest away, and went down upon the sands, and paced them in a sad and bitter mood.

But the night calmed him, and some hours of tranquil thought brought him fortitude, patience, and a clear understanding. He went to his boat, elevated by generous and delicate resolutions. Now worthy resolves are tranquillizing, and he slept profoundly.

Not so she, whose sudden but very natural change of demeanor had hurt him. When she returned and found he was gone for the night, she began to be alarmed at having offended him.

For this and other reasons she passed the night in sore perplexity, and did not sleep till morning; and so she overslept her usual time. However, when she was up, she determined to find her own breakfast; she felt it would not do to be too dependent, and on a person of uncertain humor; such for the moment she chose to pretend to herself was Hazel. Accordingly she went down to the sea to look for crayfish. She found abundance. There they lay in the water; you had but to stoop and pick them up.

But alas! they were black, lively, viperish; she went with no great relish for the task to take one up; it wriggled maliciously; she dropped it, and at that very moment, by a curious coincidence, remembered she was sick and tired of crayfish; she would breakfast on fruits. She crossed the sand, took off her shoes, and paddled through the river, and, having put on her shoes again, was about to walk up through some rank grass to the big wood, when she heard a voice behind her, and it was Mr. Hazel. She bit her lip (it was broad daylight now), and prepared quietly to discourage this excessive assiduity.

He came up to her panting a little, and, taking off his hat, said, with marked respect, "I beg your pardon, Miss Rolleston, but I know you hate reptiles; now there are a few snakes in that long grass; not poisonous ones."

"Snakes!" cried Helen; "let me get home; there—I'll go without my breakfast."

"Oh, I hope not," said Hazel, ruefully; "why, I have been rather fortunate this morning, and it is all ready."

"That is a different thing," said Helen, graciously; "you must not have your trouble for nothing, I suppose."

Directly after breakfast, Hazel took his axe and some rope from the boat, and went off in a great hurry to the jungle. In half an hour or so he returned, dragging a large conical shrub, armed with spikes for leaves, incredibly dense and prickly.

"There," said he, "there's a vegetable porcupine for you. This is your best defense against that roaring Bugbear."

"That little tree!" said Helen; "the tiger would soon jump over that."

"Ay, but not over this and sixty more; a wall of stilettoes. Don't touch it please."

He worked very hard all day, and brought twelve of these prickly trees to the bower by sunset. He was very dissatisfied with his day's work; seemed quite mortified.

"This comes of beginning at the wrong end," he said; "I went to work like a fool. I should have begun by making a cart."

"But you can't do that," said Helen soothingly; "no gentleman can make a cart."

"Oh, surely any body can make a cart, by a little thinking," said he.

"I wish," said Helen, listlessly, "you would think of something for me to do; I begin to be ashamed of not helping."

"Hum! you can plait?"

"Yes, as far as seven strands."

"Then you need never be unemployed. We want ropes, and shall want large mats for the rainy weather."

He went to the place where he had warned her of the snakes, and cut a great bundle of long silky grass, surprisingly tough, yet neither harsh nor juicy; he brought it her, and said he should be very glad of a hundred yards of light cord, three ply and five ply.

She was charmed with the grass, and the very next morning she came to breakfast with it nicely prepared, and a good deal of cord made and hanging round her neck. She found some preparations for carpenter's work lying about.

"Is that great log for the cart?" said she.

"Yes! it is a section of a sago-tree."

"What, our sago?"

"The basis. See, in the centre it is all soft pith." He got from the boat one of the augers that had scuttled the Proserpine, and soon turned the pith out. "They pound that pith in water, and run it through linen; then set the water in the sun to evaporate. The sediment is the sago of commerce, and sad, insipid stuff it is."

"Oh, please don't call any thing names one has eaten in England," said Helen, sorrowfully.

After a hasty meal, she and Mr. Hazel worked for a wager. Her taper fingers went like the wind, and though she watched him, and asked

questions, she never stopped plaiting. Mr. Hazel was no carpenter, he was merely Brains spurred by Necessity. He went to work and sawed off four short discs of the sago-log.

"Now what are those, pray?" asked Helen.

"The wheels: primeval wheels. And here are the linchpins, made of hard wood; I wattled them at odd times."

He then produced two young lime-trees he had rooted up that morning, and sowed them into poles in a minute. Then he bored two holes in each pole, about four inches from either extremity, and fitted his linchpins; then he drew out his linchpins, passed each pole first through one disc, and then through another, and fastened his linchpins. Then he ran to the boat, and came back with the stern and midship thwarts. He drilled with his centre-bit three rows of holes in these, two inches from the edge; and now Helen's work came in: her grass rope bound the thwarts tight to the horizontal poles, leaving the discs room to play easily between the thwarts and the linchpins; but there was an open space thirteen inches broad between the thwarts; this space Hazel herring-boned over with some of Helen's rope drawn as tight as possible. The cart was now made. Time occupied in its production, three hours and forty minutes.

The coachmaker was very hot: and Helen asked him timidly whether he had not better rest and eat. "No time for that," said he. "The day is not half long enough for what I have to do." He drank copiously from the stream; put the carpenter's basket into the cart: got the tow-rope from the boat and fastened it to the cart in this shape Λ , putting himself in the centre. So now the coachmaker was the horse, and off they went, rattling and creaking, to the jungle.

Helen turned her stool and watched this pageant enter the jungle. She plaited on, but not so merrily. Hazel's companionship and bustling way somehow kept her spirits up.

But whenever she was left alone, she gazed on the blank ocean, and her heart died within her. At last she strolled pensively towards the jungle, plaiting busily as she went, and hanging the rope round her neck as fast as she she made it.

At the edge of the jungle she found Hazel in a difficulty. He had cut down a wagon-load of prickly trees, and wanted to get all this mass of *noli me tangere* on to that wretched little cart, but had not rope enough to keep it together: she gave him plenty of new line, and partly by fastening a small rope to the big rope, and so making the big rope a receptacle, partly by artful tying, they dragged home an incredible load. To be sure, some of it dragged half along the ground, and came after, like a peacock's tail.

He made six trips, and then the sun was low; so he began to build. He raised a rampart of these prickly trees, a rampart three feet wide and eight feet high; but it only went round two sides and a half of the bower. So then he said he had failed again; and lay down worn out by fatigue.

Helen Rolleston, though dejected herself, could not help pitying him for his exhaustion in her service, and for his bleeding hands; she undertook the cooking, and urged him kindly to eat of every dish: and, when he rose to go, she thank-

ed him with as much feeling as modesty for the great pains he had taken to lessen those fears of hers which she saw he did not share.

These kind words more than repaid him. He went to his little den in a glow of spirits; and the next morning went off in a violent hurry, and for once seemed glad to get away from her.

"Poor Mr. Hazel," said she, softly, and watched him out of sight. Then she got her plait and went to the high point where he had barked a tree; and looked far and wide for a sail. The air was wonderfully clear; the whole ocean seemed in sight; but all was blank.

A great awe fell upon her, and sickness of heart; and then first she began to fear she was out of the known world, and might die on that island; or never be found by the present generation: and this sickening fear lurked in her from that hour, and led to consequences that will be related shortly.

She did not return for a long while, and, when she did, she found Hazel had completed her fortifications. He invited her to explore the western part of the island, but she declined.

"Thank you," said she; "not to-day; there is something to be done at home. I have been comparing my abode with yours, and the contrast makes me uncomfortable, if it doesn't you. Oblige me by building yourself a house."

"What, in an afternoon?"

"Why not? you made a cart in a forenoon. How can I tell your limits? you are quite out of my poor little depth. Well, at all events, you must roof the boat, or something. Come, be good for once, and think a little of yourself. There, I'll sit by and—what shall I do whilst you are working to oblige me?"

"Make a fishing-net of cocoa-nut fibre, four feet deep. Here's plenty of material all prepared."

"Why, Mr. Hazel, you must work in your sleep."

"No; but of course I am not idle when I am alone; and luckily I have made a spade out of hard wood at odd hours, or all the afternoon would go in making that."

"A spade! You are going to dig a hole in the ground and call it a house. That will not do for me."

"You will see," said Hazel.

The boat lay in a little triangular creek; the surrounding earth was alluvial clay; a sort of black cheesy mould, stiff, but kindly to work with the spade. Hazel cut and chiselled it out at a grand rate, and throwing it to the sides, raised by degrees two mud banks, one on each side the boat; and at last he dug so deep that he was enabled to draw the boat another yard inland.

As Helen sat by netting and forcing a smile now and then, though sad at heart, he was on his mettle, and the mud walls he raised in four hours were really wonderful. He squared their inner sides with the spade. When he had done, the boat lay in a hollow, the walls of which, half natural, half artificial, were five feet above her gunwale, and, of course, eight feet above her bottom, in which Hazel used to lie at night. He then made another little wall at the boat's stern, and laid palm-branches over all, and a few huge banana-leaves from the jungle; got a dozen large stones out of the river, tied four yards' lengths of Helen's grass-rope from stone to stone,

and so, passing the ropes over the roof, confined it, otherwise a sudden gust of wind might lift it.

"There," said he; "am I not as well off as you?—I, a great tough man. Abominable waste of time, I call it."

"Hum!" said Helen, doubtfully. All this is very clever; but I doubt whether it will keep out much rain."

"More than yours will," said Hazel, "and that is a very serious thing. I am afraid you little know how serious. But to-morrow, if you please, I will examine our resources, and lay our whole situation before you, and ask your advice. As to your Bugbear, let him roar his heart out, his reign is over. Will you not come and see your wooden walls?"

He then took Helen and showed her the tremendous nature of her fortification, and assured her that no beast of prey could face it, nor even smell at it, with impunity. And as to the door, here the defense was double and treble; but attached to four grass cords; two passed into the abode round each of the screw pine-trees at the east side, and were kept in their places by pegs driven into the trees.

"When you are up," said Hazel, "you pull these four cords steadily, and your four guards will draw back right and left, with all their bayonets, and you can come out."

Helen was very much pleased with this arrangement, and did not disguise her gratitude. She slept in peace and comfort that night. Hazel, too, profited by the mud walls and leafy roof she had compelled him to rear; for this night was colder, as it happened, than any preceding night since they came ashore. In the morning, Hazel saw a green turtle on the shore, which was unusual at that time of year. He ran and turned her, with some difficulty; then brought down his cart, cut off her head with a blow, and, in due course, dragged her up the slope. She weighed two hundred pounds. He showed Miss Rolleston the enormous shell, gave her a lecture on turtles, and especially on the four species known to South Sea navigators,—the trunk turtle, the logger-head, the green turtle, and the hawksbill, from which last, and not from any tortoise, he assured her came the tortoise-shell of commerce.

"And now," said he, "will you not give up or suspend your Reptile theory, and eat a little green turtle, the king of them all?"

"I think I must, after all that," said she; and rather relished it.

That morning he kept his word, and laid their case before her.

He said: "We are here on an island that has probably been seen and disregarded by a few whalers, but is not known to navigators nor down on any chart. There is a wide range of vegetation, proving a delightful climate on the whole, and one particularly suited to you, whose lungs are delicate. But then, comparing the beds of the rivers with the banks, a tremendous fall of rain is indicated. The rainy months (in these latitudes) are at hand, and if these rains catch us in our present condition, it will be a calamity. You have walls, but no roof to keep it out. I tremble when I think of it. This is my main anxiety. My next is about our sustenance during the rains: we have no stores under cover; no fuel; no provisions but a few cocoa-nuts. We use two lucifer matches a day; and what is to

become of us at that rate? In theory, fire can be got by rubbing two pieces of wood together; Selkirk is said to have so obtained it from pimento wood on Juan Fernandez; but, in fact, I believe the art is confined to savages. I never met a civilized man who could do it, and I have questioned scores of voyagers. As for my weapons, they consist of a boat-hook and an axe; no gun, no harpoon, no bow, no lance. My tools are a blunt saw, a blunter axe, a wooden spade, two great augers, that I believe had a hand in bringing us here, but have not been any use to us since, a centre-bit, two planes, a hammer, a pair of pincers, two brad-awls, three gimlets, two scrapers, a plumb-lead and line, a large pair of scissors, and you have a small pair, two gauges, a screw-driver, five clasp-knives, a few screws and nails of various sizes, two small barrels, two bags, two tin bowls, two wooden bowls, and the shell of this turtle, and that is a very good soup-tureen, only we have no meat to make soup with."

"Well sir," said Miss Rolleston, resignedly, "we can but kneel down and die."

"That would be cutting the Gordian knot indeed," said Hazel. "What, die to shirk a few difficulties? No. I propose an amendment to that. After the words 'kneel down,' insert the words, 'and get up again, trusting in that merciful Providence which has saved us so far, but expects us to exert ourselves too.'"

"It is good and pious advice," said Helen, "and let us follow it this moment."

"Now," said Hazel, "I have three propositions to lay before you. 1st. That I hereby give up walking and take to running: time is so precious. 2d. That we both work by night as well as day. 3d. That we each tell the other our principal wants, so that there may be four eyes on the lookout, as we go, instead of two."

"I consent," said Helen; "pray what are your wants?"

"Iron, oil, salt, tar, a bellows, a pickaxe, planks, thread, nets, light matting for roofs, bricks, chimney-pots, jars, glass, animal food, some variety of vegetable food, and so on. I'll write down the entire list for you."

"You will be puzzled to do that without ink or paper."

"Not in the least. I shall engrave it in *altorilievo*, make the words with pebbles on the turf just above high-water mark. Now tell me *your* wants."

"Well, I want—impossibilities."

"Enumerate them."

"What is the use?"

"It is the method we have agreed upon."

"Oh, very well, then. I want—a sponge."

"Good. What next?"

"I have broken my comb."

"Good."

"I'm glad you think so. I want— Oh, Mr. Hazel, what is the use?—well, I should like a mattress to lie on."

"Hair or wool?"

"I don't care which. And it is a shame to ask you for either."

"Go on."

"I want a looking-glass."

"Great Heaven! What for?"

"Oh, never mind: I want one; and some more towels, and some soap, and a few hair-pins; and

some elastic bands; and some pen, ink, and paper, to write my feelings down in this island for nobody ever to see."

When she began Hazel looked bright, but the list was like a wasp, its sting lay in its tail. However, he put a good face on it. "I'll try and get you all those things: only give me time. Do you know I am writing a dictionary on a novel method."

"That means on the sand."

"No; the work is suspended for the present. But two of the definitions in it are,—DIFFICULTIES,—things to be subdued; IMPOSSIBILITIES,—things to be trampled on."

"Well, subdue mine. Trample on—a sponge for me."

"That is just what I was going to do," said he: opened a clasp-knife and jumped coolly into the river.

Helen screamed faintly, but after all the water was only up to his knees.

He soon cut a large sponge off a piece of slimy rock, and held it up to her. "There," said he, "why, there are a score of them at your very door, and you never saw them."

"Oh, excuse me, I did see them, and shuddered; I thought they were reptiles; dormant, and biding their time."

When he was out of the river again, she thought a little, and asked him whether *old* iron would be of any use to him.

"Oh, certainly," said he; "what, do you know of any?"

"I think I saw some one day. I'll go and look for it."

She took the way of the shore; and he got his cart and spade, and went post-haste to his clay-pit.

He made a quantity of bricks, and brought them home, and put them to dry in the sun. He also cut great pieces of the turtle, and wrapped them in fresh banana-leaves, and inclosed them in clay. He then tried to make a large narrow-necked vessel, and failed utterly; so he made the clay into a great rude platter like a shallow milk-pan. Then he peeled the sago-log, off which he had cut his wheels, and rubbed it with turtle-fat, and using it as a form, produced two clay cylinders. These he set in the sun, with bricks round them to keep them from falling. Leaving all these to dry and set before he baked them, he went off to the marsh for fern-leaves. The soil being so damp, the trees were covered with a brownish-red substance, scarce distinguishable from wool. This he had counted on. But he also found in the same neighborhood a long cypress-haired moss that seemed to him very promising. He made several trips, and raised quite a stack of fern-leaves. By this time the sun had operated on his thinner pottery; so he laid down six of his large thick tiles, and lighted a fire on them of dry banana-leaves, and cocoa-nut, etc., and such light combustibles, until he had heated and hardened the clay; then he put the ashes on one side, and swept the clay clean; then he put the fire on again, and made it hotter and hotter, till the clay began to redden.

While he was thus occupied, Miss Rolleston came from the jungle radiant, carrying vegetable treasures in her apron. First she produced some golden apples with reddish leaves.

"There," said she; "and they smell delicious."

Hazel eyed them keenly.

"You have not eaten any of them?"

"What! by myself?" said Helen.

"Thank Heaven!" said Hazel, turning pale.

"These are the manchanilla, the poison apple of the Pacific."

"Poison!" said Helen, alarmed in her turn.

"Well, I don't *know* that they are poison; but travellers give them a very bad name. The birds never peck them; and I have read that even the leaves falling into still water have killed the fish. You will not eat any thing here till you have shown it me, will you?" said he, imploringly.

"No, no," said Helen; and sat down with her hand to her heart a minute. "And I was so pleased when I found them," she said; "they reminded me of home. I wonder whether these are poison, too?" and she opened her apron wide, and showed him some long yellow pods, with red specks, something like a very large banana.

"Ah, that is a very different affair," said Hazel, delighted; "these are plantains, and the greatest find we have made yet. The fruit is meat, the wood is thread, and the leaf is shelter and clothes. The fruit is good raw, and better baked, as you shall see, and I believe this is the first time the dinner and the dish were both baked together."

He cleared the now heated hearth, put the meat and fruit on it, then placed his great platter over it, and heaped fire round the platter, and light combustibles over it. Whilst this was going on, Helen took him to her bower, and showed him three rusty iron hoops, and a piece of rotten wood with a rusty nail, and the marks where others had been. "There," said she; "that is all I could find."

"Why, it is a treasure," cried he; "you will see. I have found something, too."

He then showed her the vegetable wool and vegetable hair he had collected, and told her where they grew. She owned they were wonderful imitations, and would do as well as the real things; and, ere they had done comparing notes, the platter and the dinner under it were both baked. Hazel removed the platter or milk-pan, and served the dinner in it.

If Hazel was inventive, Helen was skillful and quick at any kind of woman's work; and the following is the result of the three weeks' work; under his direction. She had made as follows:—

1. Thick mattress, stuffed with the vegetable hair and wool described above. The mattress was only two feet six inches wide; for Helen found that she never turned in bed now. She slept as she had never slept before. This mattress was made with plantain-leaves sewed together with the thread furnished by the tree itself, and doubled at the edges.

2. A long shallow net four feet deep,—cocoa fibre.

3. A great quantity of stout grass-rope, and light but close matting for the roof, and some cocoa-nut matting for the ground, and to go under the mattress. But Hazel, instructed by her, had learned to plait,—rather clumsily,—and he had a hand in the matting.

Hazel in the mean time heightened his own mud-banks in the centre, and set up brick fire-places with hearth and chimney, one on each

side; and now did all the cooking; for he found the smoke from wood made Miss Rolleston cough. He also made a number of pigeon-holes in his mud walls and lined them with clay. One of these he dried with fire, and made a pottery door to it, and there kept the lucifer-box. He made a vast number of bricks, but did nothing with them. After several failures he made two lagre pots, and two great pans, that would all four bear fire under them, and in the pans he boiled sea-water till it all evaporated and left him a sediment of salt. This was a great addition to their food, and he managed also to put by a little. But it was a slow process.

He made a huge pair of bellows, with a little assistance from Miss Rolleston; the spout was a sago stick, with the pith driven out, and the substitute for leather was the skin of a huge eel he found stranded at the east point.

Having got his bellows and fixed them to a post he drove into the ground, he took for his anvil a huge flint stone, and a smaller one for hammer: heated his old iron to a white heat, and hammered it with a world of trouble into straight lengths; and at last with a portion of it produced a long saw without teeth, but one side sharper than the other. This by repeated experiments of heating and immersing in water, he at last annealed; and when he wanted to saw, he blew his embers to a white heat (he kept the fire alive now night and day), heated his original saw red-hot, and soon sawed through the oleaginous woods of that island. If he wanted to cut down a tree in the jungle, he put the bellows and a pot of embers on his cart with other fuel, and came and lighted the fire under the tree and soon had it down. He made his pickaxe in half an hour, but with his eyes rather than his hands. He found a young tree growing on the rock, or at least on soil so shallow that the root was half above ground and at right angles to the stem. He got this tree up, shortened the stem, shaped the root, shod the point with some of his late old iron; and with this primitive tool, and a thick stake baked at the point, he opened the ground to receive twelve stout uprights, and he drove them with a tremendous mallet made upon what might be called the compendious or Hazelian method; it was a section of a hard tree with a thick shoot growing out of it, which shoot, being shortened, served for the handle. By these arts he at last saw a goal to his labors. Animal food, oil, pitch, ink, paper, were still wanting; but fish were abundant, and plantains and cocoa-nuts stored. Above all, Helen's hut was now weather-tight. Stout horizontal bars were let into the trees, and being bound to the uprights, they mutually supported each other; smaller horizontal bars at intervals kept the prickly ramparts from being driven in by a sudden gust. The canvas walls were removed, and the nails stored in a pigeon-hole, and a stout network substituted, to which huge plantain-leaves were cunningly fastened with plantain-thread. The roof was double: first, that extraordinary mass of spiked leaves which the four trees threw out, then several feet under that the huge piece of matting the pair had made. This was strengthened by double strips of canvas at the edges and in the centre, and by single strips in other parts. A great many cords and springs made of that wonderful

grass were sewn to the canvas-strengthened edges, and so it was fastened to the trees, and fastened to the horizontal bars.

When this work drew close to its completion, Hazel could not disguise his satisfaction.

But he very soon had the mortification of seeing that she for whom it was all done did not share his complacency.

A change took place in her; she often let her work fall, and brooded. She spoke sometimes sharply to Mr. Hazel, and sometimes with strained civility. She wandered away from him, and from his labors for her comfort, and passed hours at Telegraph Point, eying the illimitable ocean. She was a riddle. All sweetness at times, but at others irritable, moody, and scarce mistress of herself. Hazel was sorry and perplexed, and often expressed a fear she was ill. The answer was always in the negative. He did not press her, but worked on for her, hoping the mood would pass. And so it would, no doubt, if the cause had not remained.

Matters were still in this uncomfortable and mysterious state when Hazel put his finishing stroke to her abode.

He was in high spirits that evening: for he had made a discovery; he had at last found time for a walk, and followed the river to its source, a very remarkable lake in a hilly basin. Near this was a pond, the water of which he had tasted and found it highly bituminous: and, making further researches, he had found at the bottom of a rocky ravine a very wonderful thing—a dark resinous fluid bubbling up in quite a fountain, which, however, fell down again as it rose, and hardly any overflowed. It was like a thin pitch.

Of course, in another hour he was back there with a great pot, and half filled it. It was not like water: it did not bubble so high when some had been taken: so he just took what he could get. Pursuing his researches a little farther he found a range of rocks with snowy summits apparently; but the snow was the guano of centuries. He got to the western extremity of the island, saw another deep bay or rather branch of the sea, and on the other side of it a tongue of high land running out to sea: on that promontory stood a gigantic palm-tree. He recognized that with a certain thrill, but was in a great hurry to get home with his pot of pitch; for it was in truth a very remarkable discovery, though not without a parallel. He could not wait till morning, so with embers and cocoa-nut he made a fire in the bower, and melted his pitch which had become nearly solid, and proceeded to smear the inside of the matting in places to make it thoroughly water-tight.

Helen treated the discovery at first with mortifying indifference: but he hoped she would appreciate Nature's bounty more when she saw the practical use of this extraordinary production. He endeavored to lead her to that view. She shook her head sorrowfully. He persisted. She met him with silence. He thought this peevish, and ungrateful to Heaven; we have all different measures of the wonderful: and to him a fountain of pitch was a thing to admire greatly and thank God for; he said as much.

To Helen it was nasty stuff, and who cares where it came from? She conveyed as much by a shrug of the shoulders, and then gave a sigh that told her mind was far away.

He was a little mortified, and showed it.

One word led to another, and at last what had been long fermenting came out.

"Mr. Hazel," said she, "you and I are at cross purposes. You mean to live here. I do not."

Hazel left off working and looked greatly perplexed, the attack was so sudden in its form, though it had been a long time threatening. He found nothing to say, and she was impatient now to speak her mind, so she replied to his look.

"You are making yourself at home here. You are contented. Contented? You are happy in this horrible prison."

"And why not?" said Hazel. And he looked rather guilty. "Here are no traitors; no murderers. The animals are my friends, and the one human being I see makes me better to look at her."

"Mr. Hazel, I am in a state of mind that romantic nonsense jars on me. Be honest with me, and talk to me like a man. I say that you beam all over with happiness and content, and that you— Now answer me one question; why have you never lighted the bonfire on Telegraph Point?"

"Indeed I don't know," said he, submissively. "I have been so occupied."

"You have: and how? Not in trying to deliver us both from this dreadful situation, but to reconcile me to it. Yes, sir, under pretense (that is a harsh word, but I can't help it) of keeping out the rain. Your rain is a bugbear; it never rains, it never will rain. You are killing yourself almost to make me comfortable in this place. Comfortable?" She began to tremble all over with excitement long restrained. "And do you really suppose you can make me live on like this, by building me a nice hut. Do you think I am all body and no soul, that shelter and warmth and enough to eat can keep my heart from breaking, and my cheeks from blushing night and day? When I wake in the morning I find myself blushing to my fingers' ends." Then she walked away from him. Then she walked back. "Oh, my dear father, why did I ever leave you! Keep me here? Make me live months and years on this island? Have you sisters? Have you a mother? Ask yourself, is it likely? No; if you will not help me, and they don't love me enough to come and find me and take me home, I'll go to another home without your help or any man's." Then she rose suddenly to her feet. "I'll tie my clothes tight round me, and fling myself down from that point on to the sharp rocks below. I'll find a way from this place to heaven, if there's no way from it to those I love on earth." Then she sank down and rocked herself and sobbed hard.

The strong passion of this hitherto gentle creature quite frightened her unhappy friend, who knew more of books than women. He longed to soothe her and comfort her; but what could he say? He cried out in despair, "My God, can I do nothing for her?"

She turned on him like lightning. "You can do anything: everything. You can restore us both to our friends. You can save my life, my reason. For that will go first, I think. What *had* I done? What *had* I ever done since I was born, to be so brought down? Was ever an English lady—? And then I have such an irritation on my skin, all over me. I sometimes

wish the tiger would come and tear me all to pieces; yes, all to pieces." And with that her white teeth clicked together convulsively. "Do?" said she, darting back to the point as swiftly as she had rushed away from it. "Why, put down that nasty stuff; and leave off inventing fifty little trumpery things for me, and do one great thing instead. Oh, do not fritter that great mind of yours away in painting and patching my prison; but bring it all to bear on getting me out of my prison. Call sea and land to our rescue. Let them know a poor girl is here in unheard-of, unfathomable misery: here, in the middle of this awful ocean."

Hazel sighed deeply. "No ships seem to pass within sight of us," he muttered.

"What does that matter to *you*? You are not a common man; you are an inventor. Rouse all the powers of your mind. There must be some way. Think for me. THINK! THINK! or my blood will be on your head."

Hazel turned pale and put his head in his hands, and tried to think.

She leaned towards him with great flashing eyes of purest hazel.

The problem dropped from his lips a syllable at a time. "To diffuse—intelligence—a hundred leagues from a fixed point—an island?"

She leaned towards him with flashing expectant eyes.

But he groaned, and said: "That seems impossible."

"Then trample on it," said she, bringing his own words against him; for she used to remember all he said to her in the day, and ponder it at night—"trample on it, subdue it, or never speak to me again. Ah, I am an ungrateful wretch to speak so harshly to you. It is my misery, not me. Good, kind Mr. Hazel, oh, pray, pray bring all the powers of that great mind to bear on this one thing, and save a poor girl, to whom you have been so kind, so considerate, so noble, so delicate, so forbearing; now save me from despair."

Hysterical sobs cut her short here, and Hazel, whose loving heart she had almost torn out of his body, could only falter out in a broken voice, that he would obey her. "I'll work no more for you at present," said he, "sweet as it has been. I will think instead. I will go this moment beneath the stars and think all night."

The young woman was now leaning her head languidly back against one of the trees, weak as water after her passion. He cast a look of ineffable love and pity on her, and withdrew slowly to think beneath the tranquil stars.

Love has set men hard tasks in his time. Whether this was a light one, our reader shall decide.

TO DIFFUSE INTELLIGENCE FROM A FIXED ISLAND OVER A HUNDRED LEAGUES OF OCEAN.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE perplexity into which Hazel was thrown by the outburst of his companion rendered him unable to reduce her demand at once to an intelligible form. For some moments he seriously employed his mind on the problem until it assumed this shape.

Firstly: I do not know where this island is, having no means of ascertaining either its latitude or longitude.

Secondly: If I had such a description of its locality, how might the news be conveyed beyond the limits of the place?

As the wildness of Helen's demand broke upon his mind, he smiled sadly, and sat down upon the bank of the little river, near his boat-house, and buried his head in his hands. A deep groan burst from him, and the tears at last came through his fingers, as in despair he thought how vain must be any effort to content or to conciliate her. Impatient with his own weakness he started to his feet, when a hand was laid gently upon his arm. She stood beside him.

"Mr. Hazel," she said, hurriedly—her voice was husky—"do not mind what I have said. I am unreasonable; and I am sure I ought to feel obliged to you for all the—"

Hazel turned his face towards her, and the moon glistened on the tears that still flowed down his cheeks. He tried to check the utterance of her apology; but, ere he could master his voice, the girl's cold and constrained features seemed to melt. She turned away, wrung her hands, and, with a sharp quivering cry, she broke forth,

"Oh, sir! oh, Mr. Hazel! do forgive me. I am not ungrateful, indeed, indeed, I am not; but I am mad with despair. Judge me with compassion. At this moment, those who are very, very dear to me are awaiting my arrival in London; and, when they learn the loss of the Proserpine, how great will be their misery! Well, that misery is added to mine. Then my poor papa: he will never know how much he loved me until this news reaches him. And to think that I am dead to them, yet living! living here helplessly, helplessly. Dear, dear Arthur, how you will suffer for my sake! Oh, papa, papa! shall I never see you again?" and she wept bitterly.

"I am helpless either to aid or to console you, Miss Rolleston. By the act of a Divine Providence you were cast upon this desolate shore, and by the same Will I was appointed to serve and to provide for your welfare. I pray God that he will give me health and strength to assist you. Good-night."

She looked timidly at him for a moment, then slowly regained her hint. He had spoken coldly, and with dignity. She felt humbled, the more so that he had only bowed his acknowledgment to her apology.

For more than an hour she watched him, as he paced up and down between the boat-house and the shore; then he advanced a little towards her shelter, and she shrank into her bed, after gently closing the door. In a few moments she crept again to peep forth, and to see if he were still there, but he had disappeared.

The following morning Helen was surprised to see the boat riding at anchor in the surf, and Hazel busily engaged on her trim. He was soon on shore, and by her side.

"I am afraid I must leave you for a day, Miss Rolleston," he said. "I wish to make a circuit of the island; indeed I ought to have done so many days ago."

"Is such an expedition necessary? Surely you have had enough of the sea."

"It is very necessary. You have urged me

to undertake this enterprise. You see, it is the first step towards announcing to all passing vessels our presence in this place. I have commenced operations already. See, on yonder bluff, which I have called Telegraph Point, I have mounted the boat's ensign, and now it floats from the top of the tree beside the bonfire. I carried it there at sunrise. Do you see that pole I have shipped on board the boat? That is intended as a signal, which shall be exhibited on your great palm-tree. The flag will then stand for a signal on the northern coast, and the palm-tree, thus accoutred, will serve for a similar purpose on the western extremity of the island. As I pass along the southern and eastern shores, I propose to select spots where some mark can be erected, such as may be visible to ships at sea."

"But will they remark such signals?"

"Be assured they will, if they come within sight of the place."

Hazel knew that there was little chance of such an event; but it was something not to be neglected. He also explained that it was necessary he should arrive at a knowledge of the island, the character of its shores; and from the sea he could rapidly obtain a plan of the place, ascertain what small rivers there might be, and, indeed, see much of its interior; for he judged it to be not more than ten miles in length, and scarce three in width.

Helen felt rather disappointed that no trace of the emotion he displayed on the previous night remained in his manner, or in the expression of his face. She bowed her permission to him rather haughtily, and sat down to breakfast on some baked yams, and some rough oysters, which he had raked up from the bay while bathing that morning. The young man had regained an elasticity of bearing, an independence of tone, to which she was not at all accustomed; his manners were always soft and deferential; but his expression was more firm, and she felt that the reins had been gently removed from her possession, and there was a will to guide her which she was bound to acknowledge and obey.

She did not argue in this wise, for it is not human to reason and to feel at the same moment. She felt then instinctively that the man was quietly asserting his superiority, and the child pouted.

Hazel went about his work briskly; the boat was soon laden with every requisite. Helen watched these preparations askance, vexed with the expedition which she had urged him to make. Then she fell to reflecting on the change that seemed to have taken place in her character; she, who was once so womanly, so firm, so reasonable,—why had she become so petulant, childish, and capricious?

The sail was set, and all ready to run the cutter into the surf of the rising tide, when, taking a sudden resolution, as it were, Helen came rapidly down, and said, "I will go with you, if you please," half in command and half in doubt. Hazel looked a little surprised, but very pleased; and then she added, "I hope I shall not be in your way."

He assured her, on the contrary, that she might be of great assistance to him; and now with doubled alacrity he ran out the little vessel and leaped into the prow as she danced over the

waves. He taught her how to bring the boat's head round with the help of an oar, and, when all was snug, left her at the helm. On reaching the mouth of the bay, if it could so be called, he made her remark that it was closed by reefs, except to the north and to the west. The wind being southerly, he had decided to pass to the west, and so they opened the sea about half a mile from the shore.

For about three miles they perceived it consisted of a line of bluffs, cleft at intervals by small narrow bays, the precipitous sides of which were lined with dense foliage. Into these fissures the sea entered with a mournful sound, that died away as it crept up the yellow sands with which these nooks were carpeted. An exclamation from Helen attracted his attention to the horizon on the north-west, where a long line of breakers glittered in the sun. A reef or low sandy bay appeared to exist in that direction, about fifteen miles away, and something more than a mile in length. As they proceeded, he marked roughly on the side of his tin baler, with the point of a pin borrowed from Helen, the form of the coast-line.

An hour and a half brought them to the north-western extremity of the island. As they cleared the shelter of the land, the southerly breeze coming with some force across the open sea caught the cutter, and she lay over in a way to inspire Helen with alarm; she was about to let go the tiller, when Hazel seized it, accidentally inclosing her hand under the grasp of his own, as he pressed the tiller hard to port.

"Steady, please; don't relinquish your hold; it is all right,—no fear," he cried, as he kept his eye on their sail.

He held this course for a mile or more, and then, judging with a long tack he could weather the southerly side of the island, he put the boat about. He took occasion to explain to Helen how this operation was necessary, and she learned the alphabet of navigation. The western end of their little land now lay before them; it was about three miles in breadth. For two miles the bluff coast-line continued unbroken; then a deep bay, a mile in width and two miles in depth, was made by a long tongue of sand projecting westerly; on its extremity grew the gigantic palm, well recognized as Helen's landmark. Hazel stood up in the boat to reconnoitre the coast. He perceived the sandy shore was dotted with multitudes of dark objects. Ere long, these objects were seen to be in motion, and pointing them out to Helen, with a smile, he said,—

"Beware, Miss Rolleston, yonder are your bugbears,—and in some force, too. Those dark masses, moving upon the hillocks of sand, or rolling on the surf, are sea-lions,—the *phoca leonina*, or lion-seal."

Helen strained her eyes to distinguish the forms, but only descried the dingy objects. While thus engaged, she allowed the cutter to fall off a little, and, ere Hazel had resumed his hold upon the tiller, they were fairly in the bay; the great palm-tree on their starboard-bow.

"You seem determined to make the acquaintance of your nightmares," he remarked; "you perceive that we are embayed."

Her consternation amused him; she saw that, if they held their present course, the cutter would

take the beach about a mile ahead, where these animals were densely crowded.

At this moment, something dark bulged up close beside her in the sea, and the rounded back of a monster rolled over and disappeared. Hazel let drop the sail, for they were now fairly in the smooth water of the bay, and close to the sandy spit; the gigantic stem of the palm-tree was on their quarter, about half a mile off.

He took to the oars, and rowed slowly towards the shore. A small seal rose behind the boat and followed them, playing with the blade, its gambols resembling that of a kitten. He pointed out to Helen the mild expression of the creature's face, and assured her that all this tribe were harmless animals, and susceptible of domestication. The cub swam up to the boat quite fearlessly, and he touched its head gently; he encouraged her to do the like, but she shrank from its contact. They were now close ashore, and Hazel, throwing out his anchor in two feet of water, prepared to land the beam of wood he had brought to decorate the palm-trees as a signal.

The huge stick was soon heaved overboard, and he leaped after it. He towed it to the nearest landing to the tree, and dragged it high up on shore. Scarcely had he disposed it conveniently, intending to return in a day or two, with the means of affixing it in a prominent and remarkable manner, in the form of a spar across the trunk of the palm, when a cry from Helen recalled him. A large number of the sea-lions were coasting quietly down the surf towards the boat; indeed, a dozen of them had made their appearance around it.

Hazel shouted to her not to fear, and, desiring that her alarm should not spread to the swarm, he passed back quietly but rapidly. When he reached the water, three or four of the animals were already floundering between him and the boat. He waded slowly towards one of them, and stood beside it. The man and the creature looked quietly at each other, and then the seal rolled over, with a snuffing, self-satisfied air, winking its soft eyes with immense complacency. Helen, in her alarm, could not resist a smile at this conclusion of so terrible a demonstration; for, with all their gentle expression, the tusks of the brute looked formidable. But when she saw Hazel pushing them aside, and patting a very small cub on the back, she recovered her courage completely.

Then he took to his oars again; and, aided by the tide, which was now on the ebb, he rowed round the south-western extremity of the island. He found the water here, as he anticipated, very shallow.

It was midday when they were fairly on the southern coast; and now, sailing with the wind aft, the cutter ran through the water at racing speed. Fearing that some reefs or rocky formations might exist in their course, he reduced sail, and kept away from the shore, about a mile. At this distance he was better able to see inland, and mark down the accident of its formation.

The southern coast was uniform, and Helen said it resembled the cliffs of the Kentish or Sussex coast of England, only the English white was here replaced by the pale volcanic gray. By one o'clock they came abreast the very spot where they had first made land; and, as they

judged, due south of their residence. Had they landed here, a walk of three miles across the centre of the island would have brought them home.

For about a similar distance the coast exhibited monotonous cliffs unbroken even by a rill. It was plain that the water-shed of the island was all northward. They now approached the eastern end, where rose the circular mountain of which mention has been already made. This eminence had evidently at one time been detached from the rest of the land, to which it was now joined by a neck of swamp about a mile and a half in breadth, and two miles in length.

Hazel proposed to reconnoitre this part of the shore nearly, and ran the boat close in to land. The reeds or canes with which this bog was densely clothed grew in a dark spongy soil. Here and there this waste was dotted with ragged trees which he recognized as the cypress: from its gaunt branches hung a black, funereal kind of weeper, a kind of moss resembling iron-gray horse-hair both in texture and uses, though not so long in the staple.

This parasite, Hazel explained to Helen, was very common in such marshy ground, and was the death-flag hung out by Nature to warn man that malaria and fever were the invisible and inalienable inhabitants of that fatal neighborhood.

Looking narrowly along the low shore for some good landing, where under shelter of a tree they might repose for an hour, and spread their midday repast, they discovered an opening in the reeds, a kind of lagoon or bayou, extending into the morass between the highlands of the island and the circular mountain, but close under the base of the latter. This inlet he proposed to explore, and accordingly the sail was taken down, and the cutter was poled into the narrow creek. The water here was so shallow that the keel slid over the quicksand into which the oar sank freely. The creek soon became narrow, the water deeper, and of a blacker color, and the banks more densely covered with canes. These grew to the height of ten and twelve feet, and as close as wheat in a thick crop. The air felt dank and heavy, and hummed with myriads of insects. The black water became so deep and the bottom so sticky that Hazel took to the oars again. The creek narrowed as they proceeded, until it proved scarcely wide enough to admit of his working the boat. The height of the reeds hindered the view on either side. Suddenly, however, and after proceeding very slowly through the bends of the canal, they decreased in height and density, and they emerged into an open space of about five acres in extent, a kind of oasis in this reedy desert, created by a mossy mound which arose amidst the morass, and afforded firm footing, of which a grove of trees and innumerable shrubs availed themselves. Helen uttered an exclamation of delight as this island of foliage in a sea of reeds met her eyes, that had been famished with the arid monotony of the brake.

They soon landed.

Helen insisted on the preparations for their meal being left to her, and, having selected a sheltered spot, she was soon busy with their frugal food. Hazel surveyed the spot, and, selecting a red cedar, was soon seated forty feet above her head: making a topographical survey of the

neighborhood. He found that the bayou by which they had entered continued its course to the northern shore, thus cutting off the mountain or easterly end, and forming of it a separate island. He saw that a quarter of a mile farther on the bayou or canal parted, forming two streams, of which that to the left seemed the main channel. This he determined to follow. Turning to the west, that is, towards their home, he saw at a distance of two miles a crest of hills broken into cliffs, which defined the limit of the mainland. The sea had at one time occupied the site where the morass now stood. These cliffs formed a range, extending from north to south: their precipitous sides, clothed here and there with trees, marked where the descent was broken by platforms. Between him and this range the morass extended. Hazel took note of three places where the descent from these hills into the marsh could, he believed, most readily be made.

On the eastern side and close above him arose the peculiar mountain. Its form was that of a truncated cone, and its sides densely covered with trees of some size.

The voice of Helen called him from his perch, and he descended quickly, leaping into a mass of brushwood growing at the foot of his tree. Helen stood a few yards from him, in admiration, before a large shrub.

"Look, Mr. Hazel, what a singular production," said the girl, as she stooped to examine the plant. It bore a number of red flowers, each growing out of a fruit like a prickly pear. These flowers were in various stages; some were just opening like tulips, others, more advanced, had expanded like umbrellas, and quite overlapped the fruit, keeping it from sun and dew; others had served their turn in that way, and been withered by the sun's rays. But wherever this was the case, the fruit had also burst open and displayed or discharged its contents, and those contents looked like seeds; but on narrower inspection proved to be little insects with pink transparent wings, and bodies of incredibly vivid crimson.

Hazel examined the fruit and flowers very carefully, and stood rapt, transfixed.

"It must be!—and it is!" said he at last. "Well, I'm glad I've not died without seeing it." "What is it?" said she.

"One of the most valuable productions of the earth. It is cochineal. This is the tunal-tree."

"Oh, indeed," said Helen, indifferently: "cochineal is used for a dye; but as it is not probable we shall require to dye any thing, the discovery seems to me more curious than useful."

"You wanted some ink. This pigment, mixed with lime-juice, will form a beautiful red ink. Will you lend me your handkerchief and permit me to try if I have forgotten the method by which these little insects are obtained?" He asked her to hold her handkerchief under a bough of the tunal-tree, where the fruit was ripe. He then shook the bough. Some insects fell at once into the cloth. A great number rose and buzzed a little in the sun not a yard from where they were born; but the sun dried their blood so promptly that they soon fell dead in the handkerchief. Those that the sun so killed went through three phases of color before their eyes. They fell down black or nearly. They whitened on the

cloth : and after that came gradually to their final color, a flaming crimson. The insect thus treated appeared the most vivid of all.

They soon secured about half a tea-cupful; they were rolled up and put away, then they sat down and made a very hearty meal, for it was now past two o'clock. They re-entered the boat, and, passing once more into the morass, they found the channel of the bayou as it approached the northern shore less difficult of navigation. The bottom became sandy and hard, and the presence of trees in the swamp proved that spots of *terra firma* were more frequent. But the water shallowed, and, as they opened the shore, he saw with great vexation that the tide in receding had left the bar at the mouth of the canal visible in some parts. He pushed on, however, until the boat grounded. This was a sad affair. There lay the sea not fifty yards ahead. Hazel leaped out, and examined and forded the channel, which at this place was about two hundred feet wide. He found a narrow passage near the eastern side, and to this he towed the boat. Then he begged Miss Rolleston to land, and relieved the boat of the mast, sail, and oars. Thus lightened, he dragged her into the passage; but the time occupied in these preparations had been also occupied by Nature,—the tide had receded, and the cutter stuck immovably in the water-way, about six fathoms short of deeper water.

"What is to be done now?" inquired Helen, when Hazel returned to her side, panting, but cheerful.

"We must await the rising of the tide. I fear we are imprisoned here for three hours at least."

There was no help for it. Helen made light of the misfortune. The spot where they had landed was inclosed between the two issues of the lagoon. They walked along the shore to the more easterly, and the narrower canal, and, on arriving, Hazel found to his great annoyance that there was ample water to have floated the cutter had he selected that, the least promising road. He suggested a return by the road they came, and passing into the other canal, by that to reach the sea. They hurried back, but found by this time the tide had left the cutter high and dry on the sand. So they had no choice but to wait.

Having three hours to spare, Hazel asked Miss Rolleston's permission to ascend the mountain. She assented to remain near the boat while he was engaged in this expedition. The ascent was too rugged and steep for her powers, and the sea-shore and adjacent groves would find her ample amusement during his absence. She accompanied him to the bank of the smaller lagoon, which he forded, and waving an adieu to her he plunged into the dense wood with which the sides of the mountain were clothed.

She waited some time, and then she heard his voice shouting to her from the heights above. The mountain-top was about three quarters of a mile from where she stood, but seemed much nearer. She turned back towards the boat, walking slowly, but paused as a faint and distant cry again reached her ear. It was not repeated, and then she entered the grove.

The ground beneath her feet was soft with velvety moss, and the dark foliage of the trees rendered the air cool and deliciously fragrant. After wandering for some time, she regained the

edge of the grove near the boat, and selecting a spot at the foot of an aged cypress, she sat down with her back against its trunk. Then she took out Arthur's letter, and began to read those impassioned sentences; as she read she sighed deeply, as earnestly she found herself pitying Arthur's condition more than she regretted her own. She fell into reverie, and from reverie into a drowsy languor. How long she remained in this state she could not remember, but a slight rustle overhead recalled her senses. Believing it to be a bird moving in the branches, she was resigning herself again to rest, when she became sensible of a strange emotion, — a conviction that something was watching her with a fixed gaze. She cast her eyes around, but saw nothing. She looked upward. From the tree immediately above her lap depended a snake, its tail coiled around a dead branch. The reptile hung straight, its eyes fixed like two rubies upon Helen's, as very slowly it let itself down by its uncoiling tail. Now its head was on a level with hers; in another moment it must drop into her lap.

She was paralyzed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AFTER toiling up a rugged and steep ascent, encumbered with blocks of gray stone, of which the island seemed to be formed, forcing his way over fallen trees and through the tangled undergrowth of a species of wild vine, which abounded on the mountain-side, Hazel stopped to breathe, and peer around as well as the dense foliage permitted. He was up to his waist in scrub, and the stiff leaves of the bayonet plant rendered caution necessary in walking. At moments, through the dense foliage, he caught a glint of the sea. The sun was in the north behind him, and by this alone he guided his road due southerly and upward. Once only he found a small cleared space about an acre in extent, and here it was he uttered the cry Helen heard. He waited a few moments in the hope to hear her voice in reply, but it did not reach him. Again he plunged upward, and now the ascent became at times so arduous that more than once he almost resolved to relinquish, or, at least, to defer his task; but a moment's rest recalled him to himself, and he was one not easily baffled by difficulty or labor, so he toiled on until he judged the summit ought to have been reached. After pausing to take breath and counsel, he fancied that he had borne too much to the left, the ground to his right appeared to rise more than the path that he was pursuing, which had become level, and he concluded, that, instead of ascending, he was circling the mountain-top. He turned aside, therefore, and after ten minutes' hard climbing he was pushing through a thick and high scrub, when the earth seemed to give way beneath him, and he fell—into an abyss.

He was engulfed. He fell from bush to bush—down—down—scratch—rip—plump! until he lodged in a prickly bush more winded than hurt. Out of this he crawled, only to discover himself thus landed in a great and perfectly circular plain of about thirty acres in extent, or about 350 yards in diameter. In the centre was a lake, also circular. The broad belt of shore around

this lake was covered with rich grass, level as a bowling-green, and all this again was surrounded by a nearly perpendicular cliff, down which indeed he had fallen : this cliff was thickly clothed with shrubs and trees.

Hazel recognized the crater of an extinct volcano.

On examining the lake he found the waters impregnated with volcanic products. Its bottom was formed of asphaltum. Having made a circuit of the shores, he perceived on the westerly side—that next the island—a break in the cliff; and on a narrow examination he discovered an outlet. It appeared to him that the lake at one time had emptied its waters through this ancient water-course. The descent here was not only gradual, but the old river-bed was tolerably free from obstructions, especially of the vegetable kind.

He made his way rapidly downward, and in half an hour reached marshy ground. The canebreak now lay before him. On his left he saw the sea on the south, about a third of a mile. He knew that to the right must be the sea on the north, about half a mile or so. He bent his way thither. The edge of the swamp was very clear, and though somewhat spongy, afforded good walking unimpeded. As he approached the spot where he judged the boat to be, the underwood thickened, the trees again interlaced their arms, and he had to struggle through the foliage. At length he struck the smaller lagoon, and, as he was not certain whether it was fordable, he followed its course to the shore, where he had previously crossed. In a few moments he reached the boat, and was pleased to find her afloat. The rising tide had even moved her a few feet back into the canal.

Hazel shouted to apprise Miss Rolleston of his return, and then proceeded to restore the mast to its place, and replace the rigging and the oars. This occupied some little time. He felt surprised that she had not appeared. He shouted again. No reply.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HAZEL advanced hurriedly into the grove, which he hunted thoroughly, but without effect. He satisfied himself that she could not have quitted the spot, since the marsh inclosed it on one side, the canals on the second and third, the sea on the fourth. He returned to the boat more surprised than anxious. He waited awhile, and again shouted her name,—stopped,—listened,—no answer.

Yet surely Helen could not have been more than a hundred yards from where he stood. His heart beat with a strange sense of apprehension. He heard nothing but the rustling of the foliage and the sop of the waves on the shore, as the tide crept up the shingle. As his eyes roved in every direction, he caught sight of something white near the foot of a withered cypress-tree, not fifty yards from where he stood. He approached the bushes in which the tree was partially concealed on that side, and quickly recognized a portion of Helen's dress. He ran towards her—burst through the underwood, and gained the inclosure. She was sitting there, asleep, as he conjectured, her back leaning

against the trunk. He contemplated her thus for one moment, and then he advanced, about to awaken her; but was struck speechless. Her face was ashy pale, her eyes open and widely distended; her bosom heaved slowly. Hazel approached rapidly, and called to her.

Her eyes never moved, not a limb stirred. She sat glaring forward. On her lap was coiled a snake,—gray, mottled with muddy green.

Hazel looked round and selected a branch of the dead tree, about three feet in length. Armed with this, he advanced slowly to the reptile. It was very quiet, thanks to the warmth of her lap. He pointed the stick at it; the vermin lifted its head, and its tail began to quiver; then it darted at the stick, throwing itself its entire length. Hazel retreated, the snake coiled again, and again darted. By repeating this process four or five times, he enticed the creature away; and then, availing himself of a moment before it could recoil, he struck it a smart blow on the neck.

When Hazel turned to Miss Rolleston, he found her still fixed in the attitude into which terror had transfixed her. The poor girl had remained motionless for an hour, under the terrible fascination of the reptile, comatized. He spoke to her, but a quick spasmodic action of her throat and a quivering of her hands alone responded. The sight of her suffering agonized him beyond expression, but he took her hands,—he pressed them, for they were icy cold,—he called piteously on her name. But she seemed incapable of effort. Then stooping he raised her tenderly in his arms, and carried her to the boat, where he laid her, still unresisting and incapable.

With trembling limbs and weak hands, he launched the cutter, and they were once more afloat and bound homeward.

He dipped the baler into the fresh water he had brought with him for their daily supply, and dashed it on her forehead. This he repeated until he perceived her breathing became less painful and more rapid. Then he raised her a little, and her head rested upon his arm. When they reached the entrance of the bay he was obliged to pass it, for, the wind being still southerly, he could not enter by the north gate, but came round and ran in by the western passage, the same by which they had left the same morning.

Hazel bent over Helen, and whispered tenderly that they were at home. She answered by a sob. In half an hour the keel grated on the sand near the boat-house. Then he asked her if she were strong enough to reach her hut. She raised her head, but she felt dizzy; he helped her to land; all power had forsaken her limbs; her head sank on his shoulder, and his arm, wound round her lithe figure, alone prevented her falling helplessly at his feet. Again he raised her in his arms and bore her to the hut. Here he laid her down on her bed, and stood for a moment beside her, unable to restrain his tears.

CHAPTER XXX.

It was a wretched and anxious night for Hazel. He watched the hut, without the courage to approach it. That one moment of weakness which occurred to him on board the Proserpine,

when he had allowed Helen to perceive the nature of his feelings towards her, had rendered all his actions open to suspicion. He dared not exhibit towards her any sympathy,—he might not extend to her the most ordinary civility. If she fell ill, if fever supervened! how could he nurse her, attend upon her? His touch must have a significance, he knew that; for, as he bore her insensible form, he embraced rather than carried the precious burden. Could he look upon her in her suffering without betraying his forbidden love? And then would not his attentions afflict more than console?

Chewing the cud of such bitter thoughts, he passed the night without noticing the change which was taking place over the island. The sun rose; and this awakened him from his reverie, which had replaced sleep; he looked around, and then became sensible of the warnings in the air.

The sea-birds flew about vaguely and absurdly, and seemed sporting in currents of wind; yet there was but little wind down below. Presently clouds came flying over the sky, and blacker masses gathered on the horizon. The sea changed color.

Hazel knew the weather was breaking. The wet season was at hand,—the moment when fever, if such an invisible inhabitant there was on that island, would visit them. In a few hours the rain would be upon them, and he reproached himself with want of care in the construction of the hut. For some hours he hovered around it before he ventured to approach the door and call to Helen. He thought he heard her voice faintly, and he entered. She lay there as he had placed her. He knelt beside her, and was appalled at the change in her appearance.

The poor girl's system had received a shock for which it was unprepared. Her severe sufferings at sea had, strange to say, reduced her in appearance less than could have been believed; for her physical endurance proved greater than that of the strong men around her. But the food which the island supplied was not suited to restore her strength, and the nervous shock to which she had been subjected was followed by complete prostration.

Hazel took her unresisting hand, which he would have given a world to press. He felt her pulse; it was weak, but slow. Her cheeks were hollow, her eyes sunken; her hand dropped helplessly when he released it.

Leaving the hut quietly, but hastily, he descended the hill to the rivulet, which he crossed. About half a mile above the boat-house the stream forked, one of its branches coming from the west, the other from the east. Between this latter branch and Terrapin Wood was a stony hill; to this spot Hazel went, and fell to gathering a handful of poppies. When he had obtained a sufficient quantity he returned to the boat-house, made a small fire of chips, and, filling his tin baler with water, he set down the poppies to boil. When the liquor was cool, he measured out a portion and drank it. In about twenty minutes his temples began to throb, a sensation which was rapidly followed by nausea.

It was midday before he recovered from the effects of his experiment sufficiently to take food. Then he waited for two hours, and felt much restored. He stole to the hut and looked in. Hel-

en lay there as he had left her. He stooped over her; her eyes were half closed, and she turned them slowly upon him; her lips moved a little,—that was all. He felt her pulse again; it was still weaker, and slower. He rose and went away, and, regaining the boat-house, he measured out a portion of the poppy liquor, one-third of the dose he had previously taken, and drank it. No headache or nausea succeeded; he felt his pulse; it became quick and violent, while a sense of numbness overcame him, and he slept. It was but for a few minutes. He awoke with a throbbing brow, and some sickness; but with a sense of delight at the heart, for he had found an opiate, and prescribed its quantity.

He drained the liquor away from the poppy leaves, and carried it to the hut. Measuring with great care a small quantity, he lifted the girl's head and placed it to her lips. She drank it mechanically. Then he watched beside her, until her breathing and her pulse changed in character. She slept. He turned aside then, and buried his face in his hands and prayed fervently for her life,—prayed as we pray for the daily bread of the heart. He prayed and waited.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE next morning, when Helen awoke, she was very weak; her head ached, but she was herself. Hazel had made a broth for her from the fleshy part of a turtle; this greatly revived her, and by midday she was able to sit up. Having seen that her wants were within her reach, he left her; but in a few moments she heard him busily engaged on the roof of her hut.

On his return, he explained to her his fears that the structure was scarcely as weather-proof as he desired; and he anticipated hourly the commencement of the rainy season. Helen smiled and pointed to the sky, which here was clear and bright. But Hazel shook his head doubtfully. The wet season would commence probably with an atmospheric convulsion, and then settle down to uninterrupted rain. Helen refused obstinately to believe in more rain than they had experienced on board the boat—a genial shower.

"You will see," replied Hazel. "If you do not change your views within the next three days, then call me a false prophet."

The following day passed, and Helen recovered more strength, but still was too weak to walk; but she employed herself, at Hazel's request, in making a rope of cocoa-nut fibre, some forty yards long. This he required to fish up the spar to a sufficient height on the great palm-tree, and bind it firmly in its place. While she worked nimbly, he employed himself in gathering a store of such things as they would require during the coming wintry season. She watched him with a smile, but he persevered. So that day passed. The next morning the rope was finished. Helen was not so well, and was about to help herself to the poppy liquor, when Hazel happily stopped her hand in time: he showed her the exact dose necessary, and explained minutely the effects of a larger draught. Then he shouldered the rope, and set out for Palm-tree Point.

He was absent about six hours, of which Helen slept four. And for two, which seemed very

long, she ruminated. What was she thinking of that made her smile and weep at the same moment? and she looked so impatiently towards the door. He entered at last very fatigued. It was eleven miles to the Point and back. While eating his frugal supper, he gave her a detail of his day's adventures. Strange to say, he had not seen a single seal on the sands. He described how he had tied one end of her rope to the middle of the spar, and, with the other between his teeth, he climbed the great palm. For more than an hour he toiled; he gained its top, passed the rope over one of its branches, and hauled up the spar to about eighty feet above the ground; then descending with the other end, he wound the rope spirally round and round the tree, thus binding to its trunk the first twenty feet by which the spar hung from the branch.

She listened very carelessly, he thought, and betrayed little interest in this enterprise which had cost him so much labor and fatigue.

When he had concluded, she was silent awhile, and then, looking up quickly, said, to his great surprise,—

"I think I may increase the dose of your medicine there. You are mistaken in its power. I am sure I can take four times what you gave me."

"Indeed you are mistaken," he answered, quickly. "I gave you the extreme measure you can take with safety."

"How do you know that? You can only guess at its effects. At any rate, I shall try it."

Hazel hesitated, and then confessed that he had made a little experiment on himself before risking its effects upon her.

Helen looked up at him as he said this so simply and quietly. Her great eyes filled with an angelic light. Was it admiration? Was it thankfulness? Her bosom heaved, and her lips quivered. It was but a moment, and she felt glad that Hazel had turned away from her and saw nothing.

A long silence followed this little episode, when she was aroused from her reverie.

Patter—pat—pat—patter.

She looked up.

Pat—patter—patter.

Their eyes met. It was the rain. Hazel only smiled a little, and then ran down to his boat-house, to see that all was right there, and then returned with a large bundle of chips, with which he made a fire, for the sky had darkened overhead. Gusts of wind ran along the water; it had become suddenly chilly. They had almost forgotten the feel of wet weather.

Ere the fire had kindled, the rain came down in torrents, and, the matted roof being resonant, they heard it strike here and there above their heads.

Helen sat down on her little stool and reflected.

In that hut were two persons. One had foretold this, and feared it, and provided against it. The other had said petulantly it was a bugbear.

And now the rain was pattering, and the Prophet was on his knees making her as comfortable as he could in spite of all, and was not the man to remind her he had foretold it.

She pondered his character while she watched his movements. He put down his embers, then he took a cocoa-pod out from the wall, cut it in

slices with his knife, and made a fine clear fire; then he ran out again, in spite of Helen's remonstrance, and brought a dozen large scales of the palm-tree. It was all the more cheering for the dismal scene without and the pattering of the rain on the resounding roof.

But, thanks to Hazel's precaution, the hut proved weather-tight; of which fact having satisfied himself, he bade her good-night. He was at the door when her voice recalled him.

"Mr. Hazel, I can not rest this night without asking your pardon for all the unkind things I may have done and said; without thanking you humbly for your great forbearance and your respect for the unbaptized—I mean the unfortunate girl thus cast upon your mercy."

She held out her hand; he took it between his own, and faintly expressed his gratitude for her kindness; and so she sent him away brimful of happiness.

The rain was descending in torrents. She heard it, but he did not feel it; for she had spread her angel's wings over his existence, and he regained his sheltered boat-house he knew not how.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE next day was Sunday. Hazel had kept a calendar of the week, and every seventh day was laid aside with jealousy, to be devoted to such simple religious exercises as he could invent. The rain still continued, with less violence indeed, but without an hour's intermission. After breakfast he read to her the exodus of the Israelites, and their sufferings during that desert life. He compared those hardships with their own troubles, and pointed out to her how their condition presented many things to be thankful for. The island was fruitful, the climate healthy. They might have been cast away on a sandy key or reef, where they would have perished slowly and miserably of hunger and exposure. Then they were spared to each other. Had she been alone there, she could not have provided for herself; had he been cast away a solitary man, the island would have been to him an intolerable prison.

In all these reflections Hazel was very guarded that no expression should escape him to arouse her apprehension. He was so careful of this, that she observed his caution and watched his restraint. And Helen was thinking more of this than of the holy subject on which he was discoursing. The disguise he threw over his heart was penetrable to the girl's eye. She saw his love in every careful word, and employed herself in detecting it under his rigid manner. Secure in her own position, she could examine his from the loop-holes of her soul, and take a pleasure in witnessing the suppressed happiness she could bestow with a word. She did not wonder at her power. The best of women have the natural vanity to take for granted the sway they assume over the existence which submits to them.

A week passed thus, and Hazel blessed the rain that drove them to this sociability. He had prepared the bladder of a young seal which had drifted ashore dead. This membrane, dried in the sun, formed a piece of excellent parchment, and he desired to draw upon it a map of the isl-

and. To accomplish this, the first thing was to obtain a good red ink from the cochineal, which is crimson. He did according to his means. He got one of the tin vessels, and filed it till he had obtained a considerable quantity of the metal. This he subjected for forty hours to the action of lime-juice. He then added the cochineal, and mixed till he obtained a fine scarlet. In using it he added a small quantity of a hard and pure gum,—he had found gum abounded in the island. His pen was made from an osprey's feather, hundreds of which were strewn about the cliffs, and some of these he had already secured and dried.

Placing his tin baler before him, on which he had scratched his notes, he drew a map of the island.

"What shall we call it?" said he.

Helen paused, and then replied, "Call it 'GODSEND' Island."

"So I will," he said, and wrote it down.

Then they named the places they had seen. The reef Helen had discovered off the north-west coast they called "White Water Island," because of the breakers. Then came "Seal Bay," "Palm-tree Point," "Mount Lookout" (this was the hill due south of where they lived). They called the cane-brake "Wild Duck Swamp," and the spot where they lunched "Cochineal Clearing." The mountain was named "Mount Cavity."

But what shall we call the capital of the kingdom—this hut?" said Miss Rolleston, as she leaned over him and pointed to the spot.

"Saint Helen's," said Hazel, looking up; and he wrote it down ere she could object.

Then there was a little awkward pause, while he was busily occupied in filling up some topographical details. She turned it off gayly.

"What are those caterpillars that you have drawn there, sprawling over my kingdom?" she asked.

"Caterpillars! you are complimentary, Miss Rolleston. Those are mountains."

"Oh, indeed; and those lines you are now drawing are rivers, I presume."

"Yes; let us call this branch of our solitary estuary, which runs westward, the river Lee, and this, to the east, the river Medway. Is such your Majesty's pleasure?"

"*La Reine le veut*," replied Helen, smiling.

"But, Master Geographer, it seems to me that you are putting in mountains and rivers which you have never explored: how do you know that these turns and twists in the stream exist as you represent them? and those spurs, which look so real, have you not added them only to disguise the caterpillar character of your range of hills?"

Hazel laughed as he confessed to drawing on his fancy for some little details. But pleaded that all geographers, when they drew maps, were licensed to fill in a few such touches, where discovery had failed to supply particulars.

Helen had always believed religiously in maps, and was amused when she reflected on her former credulity.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HELEN'S strength was coming back to her but slowly; she complained of great lassitude and want of appetite. But, the following day hav-

ing cleared up, the sun shone out with great power and brilliancy. She gladly welcomed the return of the fine weather, but Hazel shook his head; ten days' rain was not their portion,—the bad weather would return, and complete the month or six weeks' winter to which Nature was entitled. The next evening the appearance of the sky confirmed his opinion. The sun set like a crimson shield; gory, and double its usual size. It entered into a thick bank of dark violet cloud that lay on the horizon, and seemed to split the vapor into rays, but of a dusky kind; immediately above this crimson, the clouds were of a brilliant gold, but higher they were the color of rubies, and went gradually off to gray.

But as the orb dipped to the horizon a solid pile of unearthly clouds came up from the south-east; their bodies were singularly and unnaturally black, and mottled with copper-color, and hemmed with a fiery yellow: and these infernal clouds towered up their heads, pressing forward as if they all strove for precedence; it was like Milton's fiends attacking the sky. The rate at which they climbed was wonderful. The sun set and the moon rose full, and showed those angry masses surging upwards and jostling each other as they flew.

Yet below it was dead calm.

Having admired the sublimity of the scene, and seen the full moon rise, but speedily lose her light in a brassy halo, they entered the hut, which was now the head-quarters, and they supped together there.

While they were eating their little meal the tops of the trees were heard to sigh, so still was every thing else. None the less did those strange clouds fly northward, eighty miles an hour. After supper, Helen sat busy over the fire, where some gum, collected by Hazel, resembling India-rubber, was boiling; she was preparing to cover a pair of poor Welch's shoes, inside and out, with a coat of this material, which Hazel believed to be water-proof. She sat in such a position that he could watch her. It was a happy evening. She seemed content. She had got over her fear of him; they were good comrades if they were nothing more. It was happiness to him to be by her side even on those terms. He thought of it all as he looked at her. How distant she had seemed once to him; what an unapproachable goddess. Yet there she was by his side in a hut he had made for her.

He could not help sipping the soft intoxicating draught her mere presence offered him. But by-and-by he felt his heart was dissolving within him, and he was trifling with danger. He must not look on her too long, seated by the fire like a wife. The much-enduring man rose, and turned his back upon the sight he loved so dearly: he went out at the open door, intending to close it and bid her good-night. But he did not do so, just then; for his attention as an observer of nature was arrested by the unusual conduct of certain animals. Gannets and other sea-birds were running about the opposite wood and craning their necks in a strange way. He had never seen one enter that wood before.

Seals and sea-lions were surrounding the slope, and crawling about, and now and then plunging into the river, which they crossed with infinite difficulty, for it was running very high and strong. The trees also sighed louder than ever.

Hazel turned back to tell Miss Rolleston something extraordinary was going on. She sat in sight from the river, and, as he came towards the hut, he saw her sitting by the fire reading.

He stopped short. Her work lay at her feet; she had taken out a letter, and she was reading it by the fire.

As she read it her face was a puzzle. But Hazel saw the act alone; and a dart of ice seemed to go through and through him.

This, then, was her true source of consolation. He thought it was so before. He had even reason to think so. But, never seeing any palpable proofs, he had almost been happy. He turned sick with jealous misery, and stood there rooted and frozen.

Then came a fierce impulse to shut the sight out that caused this pain.

He almost flung her portcullis to, and made his hands bleed. But a bleeding heart does not feel scratches.

"Good-night," said he, hoarsely.

"Good-night," said she, kindly.

And why should she not read his letter? She was his affianced bride, bound to him by honor as well as inclination. This was the reflection to which, after a sore battle with his loving heart, the much-enduring man had to come to at last; and he had come to it, and was getting back his peace of mind, though not his late complacency, and about to seek repose in sleep, when suddenly a clap of wind came down like thunder, and thrashed the island and every thing in it.

Every thing animate and inanimate seemed to cry out as the blow passed.

Another soon followed, and another—intermittent gusts at present, but of such severity that not one came without making its mark.

Birds were driven away like paper; the sea-lions whimpered, and crouched into corners, and huddled together, and held each other, whining.

Hazel saw but one thing; the frail edifice he had built for the creature he adored. He looked out of his boat, and fixed his horror-stricken eyes on it; he saw it waving to and fro, yet still firm. But he could not stay there. If not in danger, she must be terrified. He must go and support her. He left his shelter, and ran towards her hut. With a whoop and a scream another blast tore through the wood, and caught him. He fell, dug his hands into the soil, and clutched the earth. While he was in that position, he heard a sharp crack; he looked up in dismay and saw that one of Helen's trees had broken like a carrot, and the head was on the ground leaping about; while a succession of horrible sounds of crashing, and rending, and tearing, showed the frail hut was giving way on every side; racked and riven and torn to pieces. Hazel, though a stout man, uttered cries of terror death would never have drawn from him; and, with a desperate headlong rush, he got to the place where the bowler had been, but now it was a prostrate skeleton, with the mat roof flapping like a loose sail above it, and Helen below.

As he reached the hut, the wind got hold of the last of the four shrubs, that did duty for a door, and tore it from the cord that held it, and whirled it into the air; it went past Hazel's face like a bird flying.

Though staggered himself by the same blow

of wind, he clutched the tree and got into the hut.

He found her directly. She was kneeling beneath the mat that a few minutes ago had been her roof. He extricated her in a moment, uttering inarticulate cries of pity and fear.

"Don't be frightened," said she, "I am not hurt."

But he felt her quiver from head to foot. He wrapped her in all her rugs, and thinking of nothing but her safety, lifted her in his strong arms to take her to his own place, which was safe from wind at least.

But this was no light work. To go there erect was impossible.

Holding tight by the tree, he got her to the lee of the tent and waited for a lull. He went rapidly down the hill, but, ere he reached the river, a gust came careering over the sea. A sturdy young tree was near him. He placed her against it and wound his arms round her and its trunk. The blast came: the tree bent almost to the ground, then whirled round, recovered, shivered; but he held firmly. It passed. Again he lifted her, and bore her to the boat-house. As he went, the wind almost choked her, and her long hair lashed his face like a whip. But he got her in, and then sat panting and crouching, but safe. They were none too soon; the tempest increased in violence, and became more continuous. No clouds, but a ghastly glare all over the sky. No rebellious waves, but a sea hissing and foaming under its master's lash. The river ran roaring and foaming by, and made the boat heave even in its little creek. The wind, though it could no longer shake them, went screaming terribly close over their heads,—no longer like air in motion, but solid and keen, it seemed the Almighty's scythe mowing down nature; and soon it became, like turbid water, blackened with the leaves, branches, and fragments of all kinds it whirled along with it. The trees fell crashing on all sides, and the remains passed over their heads into the sea.

Helen behaved admirably. Speech was impossible, but she thanked him without it,—eloquently; she nestled her little hand into Hazel's, and to Hazel that night, with all its awful sights and sounds, was a blissful one. She had been in danger, but now was safe by his side. She had pressed his hand to thank him, and now she was covering a little towards him in a way that claimed him as her protector. Her glorious hair blew over him and seemed to net him: and now and then, as they heard some crash nearer and more awful than another, she clutched him quickly though lightly; for, in danger, her sex love to feel a friend; it is not enough to see him near: and once, when a great dusky form of a sea-lion came crawling over the mound, and whimpering peeped into the boat-house, she even fled to his shoulder with both hands for a moment, and was there, light as a feather, till the creature had passed on. And his soul was full of peace, and a great tranquillity overcame it. He heard nothing of the wrack, knew nothing of the danger.

Oh, mighty Love! The tempest might blow, and fill the air and earth with ruin, so that it spared her. The wind was kind, and gentle the night, which brought that hair round his face, and that head so near his shoulder, and gave

him the holy joy of protecting under his wing the soft creature he adored.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ON the morning that followed this memorable night our personages seemed to change characters. Hazel sat down before the relics of the hut—three or four strings dangling, and a piece of network waving—and eyed them with shame, regret, and humiliation. He was so absorbed in his self-reproaches that he did not hear a light footstep, and Helen Rolleston stood near him a moment or two, and watched the play of his countenance with a very inquisitive and kindly light in her own eyes.

"Never mind," said she, soothingly.

Hazel started at the music.

"Never mind your house being blown to atoms, and mine has stood?" said he, half reproachfully.

"You took too much pains with mine."

"I will take a great deal more with the next."

"I hope not. But I want you to come and look at the havoc. It is terrible; and yet so grand." And thus she drew him away from the sight that caused his pain.

They entered the wood by a path Hazel had cut from the sea-shore, and viewed the devastation in Terrapin Wood. Prostrate trees lay across one another in astonishing numbers, and in the strangest positions; and their glorious plumes swept the earth. "Come," said she, "it is a bad thing for the poor trees, but not for us. See, the place is strewn with treasures. Here is a tree full of fans all ready made. And what is that? A horse's tail growing on a cocoa-tree! and a long one too! that will make ropes for you, and thread for me. Ah, and here is a cabbage. Poor Mr. Welch! Well, for one thing, you need never saw nor climb any more. See the advantages of a hurricane."

From the wood she took him to the shore, and there they found many birds lying dead; and Hazel picked up several that he had read of as good to eat. For certain signs had convinced him his fair and delicate companion was carnivora, and must be nourished accordingly. Seeing him so employed, she asked him archly whether he was beginning to see the comforts of a hurricane. "Not yet," said he; "the account is far from even."

"Then come to where the rock was blown down." She led the way gayly across the sands to a point where an overhanging crag had fallen, with two trees and a quantity of earth and plants that grew above it. But, when they got nearer, she became suddenly grave, and stood still. The mass had fallen upon a sheltered place, where seals were hiding from the wind, and had buried several; for two or three limbs were sticking out, of victims overwhelmed in the ruin; and a magnificent sea-lion lay clear of the smaller rubbish, but quite dead. The cause was not far to seek: a ton of hard rock had struck him, and then ploughed up the sand in a deep furrow, and now rested within a yard or two of the animal, whose back it had broken. Hazel went up to the creature and looked at it: then he came to Helen; she was standing aloof. "Poor bugbear," said

he. "Come away: it is an ugly sight for you."

"Oh yes," said Helen. Then, as they returned, "Does not that reconcile you to the loss of a hut? We are not blown away nor crushed."

"That is true," said Hazel; "but suppose your health should suffer from the exposure to such fearful weather. So unlucky! so cruel! just as you were beginning to get stronger."

"I am all the better for it. Shall I tell you? excitement is a good thing; not too often, of course; but now and then; and, when we are in the humor for it, it is meat and drink and medicine to us."

"What! to a delicate young lady?"

"Ay, 'to a delicate young lady.' Last night has done me a world of good. It has shaken me out of myself. I am in better health and spirits. Of course I am very sorry the hut is blown down,—because you took so much trouble to build it: but, on my own account, I really don't care a straw. Find me some corner to nestle in at night, and all day I mean to be about, and busy as a bee, helping you, and—Breakfast! breakfast! Oh, how hungry I am." And this spirited girl led the way to the boat with a briskness and a vigor that charmed and astonished him.

Souvent femme varie.

This gracious behavior did not blind Hazel to the serious character of the situation, and all breakfast-time he was thinking and thinking, and often kept a morsel in his mouth, and forgot to eat it for several seconds, he was so anxious and puzzled. At last he said, "I know a large hollow tree with apertures. If I were to close them all but one, and keep that for the door? No: trees have betrayed me; I'll never trust another tree with you. Stay; I know—I know—a cavern." He uttered the verb rather loudly, but the substantive with a sudden feebleness of intonation that was amusing. His timidity was superfluous; if he had said he knew "a bank whereon the wild thyme grows," the suggestion would have been well received that morning.

"A cavern!" cried Helen. "It has always been the dream of my life to live in a cavern."

Hazel brightened up. But the next moment he clouded again. "But I forgot. It will not do; there is a spring running right through it; it comes down nearly perpendicular through a channel it has bored, or enlarged; and splashes on the floor."

"How convenient!" said Helen; "now I shall have a bath in my room, instead of having to go miles for it. By-the-by, now you have invented the shower-bath, please discover Soap. Not that one really wants any in this island; for there is no dust, and the very air seems purifying. But who can shake off the prejudices of early education?"

Hazel said, "Now I'll laugh as much as you like, when once this care is off my mind."

He ran off to the cavern, and found it spacious and safe; but the spring was falling in great force, and the roof of the cave glistened with moisture. It looked a hopeless case. But if Necessity is the mother of Invention, surely Love is the father. He mounted to the rock above, and found the spot where the spring suddenly descended into the earth with the loudest gurgle he had ever heard; a gurgle of defiance. Nothing

was to be done there. But he traced it upward a little way, and found a place where it ran beside a deep decline. "Aha, my friend!" said he. He got his spade, and with some hours' hard work dug it a fresh channel, and carried it away entirely from its course. He returned to the cavern. Water was dripping very fast; but, on looking up, he could see the light of day twinkling at the top of the spiral water-course he had robbed of its supply. Then he conceived a truly original idea: why not turn his empty water-course into a chimney, and so give to one element what he had taken from another? He had no time to execute this just then, for the tide was coming in, and he could not afford to lose any one of those dead animals. So he left the funnel to drip, that being a process he had no means of expediting, and moored the sea-lion to the very rock that had killed him, and was proceeding to dig out the seals, when a voice he never could hear without a thrill summoned him to dinner.

It was a plentiful repast, and included roast pintado and cabbage-palm. Helen Rolleston informed him during dinner that he would no longer be allowed to monopolize the labor attendant upon their condition.

"No," said she, "you are always working for me, and I shall work for you. Cooking and washing are a woman's work, not a man's; and so are plaiting and netting."

This healthy resolution once formed was adhered to with a constancy that belonged to the girl's character. The roof of the ruined hut came ashore in the bay that evening, and was fastened over the boat. Hazel lighted a bonfire in the cavern, and had the satisfaction of seeing some of the smoke issuing above. But he would not let Miss Rolleston occupy it yet. He shifted her things to the boat, and slept in the cave himself. However, he lost no time in laying down a great hearth, and built a fire-place and chimney in the cave. The chimney went up to the hole in the arch of the cave; then came the stone funnel, stolen from Nature; and above, on the upper surface of the cliff, came the chimney-pot. Thus the chimney acted like a German stove: it stood in the centre, and soon made the cavern very dry and warm, and a fine retreat during the rains. When it was ready for occupation, Helen said she would sail to it: she would not go by land; that was too tame for her. Hazel had only to comply with her humor, and at high water they got into the boat, and went down the river into the sea with a rush that made Helen wince. He soon rowed her across the bay to a point distant not more than fifty yards from the cavern, and installed her. But he never returned to the river; it was an inconvenient place to make excursions from; and, besides, all his work was now either in or about the cavern; and that convenient hurricane, as Helen called it, not only made him a builder again; it also made him a currier, a soap-boiler and a salter. So they drew the boat just above high-water mark in a sheltered nook, and he set up his arsenal ashore.

In this situation, day glided by after day, and week after week, in vigorous occupations, brightened by social intercourse, and in some degree by the beauty and the friendship of the animals. Of all this industry we can only afford a brief summary. Hazel fixed two uprights at each side of the cavern's mouth, and connected each

pair by a beam; a netting laid on these, and covered with gigantic leaves from the prostrate palms, made a sufficient roof in this sheltered spot. On this terrace they could sit even in the rain, and view the sea. Helen cooked in the cave, but served dinner up on this beautiful terrace. So now she had a But and a Ben, as the Scotch say. He got a hoghead of oil from the sea-lion; and so the cave was always lighted now, and that was a great comfort, and gave them more hours of in-door employment and conversation. The poor bugbear really brightened their existence. Of the same oil, boiled down and mixed with wood-ashes, he made soap, to Helen's great delight. The hide of this animal was so thick he could do nothing with it but cut off pieces to make the soles of shoes if required. But the seals were miscellaneous treasures; he contrived with guano and aromatics to curry their skins; of their bladders he made vile parchment, and of their entrails gut, catgut, and twine, beyond compare. He salted two cubs, and laid up the rest in store, by inclosing large pieces in clay. When these were to be used, the clay was just put into hot embers for some hours, then broken, and the meat eaten with all its juices preserved.

Helen cooked and washed, and manufactured salt; and collected quite a store of wild cotton, though it grew very sparingly, and it cost her hours to find a few pods. But in hunting for it she found other things—health for one. After sunset she was generally employed a couple of hours on matters which occupy the fair in every situation of life. She made herself a seal-skin jacket and pork-pie hat. She made Mr. Hazel a man's cap of seal-skin with a point. But her great work was with the cotton, which will be described hereafter.

However, for two hours after sunset, no more (they rose at peep of day), her physician allowed her to sit and work; which she did, and often smiled, while he sat by and discoursed to her of all the things he had read, and surprised himself by the strength and activity of his memory. He attributed it partly to the air of the island. Nor were his fingers idle even at night. He had tools to sharpen for the morrow, glass to make and polish out of a laminated crystal he had found. And then the hurricane had blown away, among many properties, his map; so he had to make another with similar materials. He completed the map in due course, and gave it to Helen. It was open to the same strictures she had passed on the other. Hazel was no cartographer. Yet this time she had nothing but praise for it. How was that?

To the reader it now presented, not as a specimen of cartographic art, but as a little curiosity in its way, being a fac-simile of the map John Hazel drew for Helen Rolleston with such out-of-the-way materials as that out-of-the-way island afforded. Above all, it will enable the reader to follow our personages in their little excursions past and future, and also to trace the course of a mysterious event we have to record.

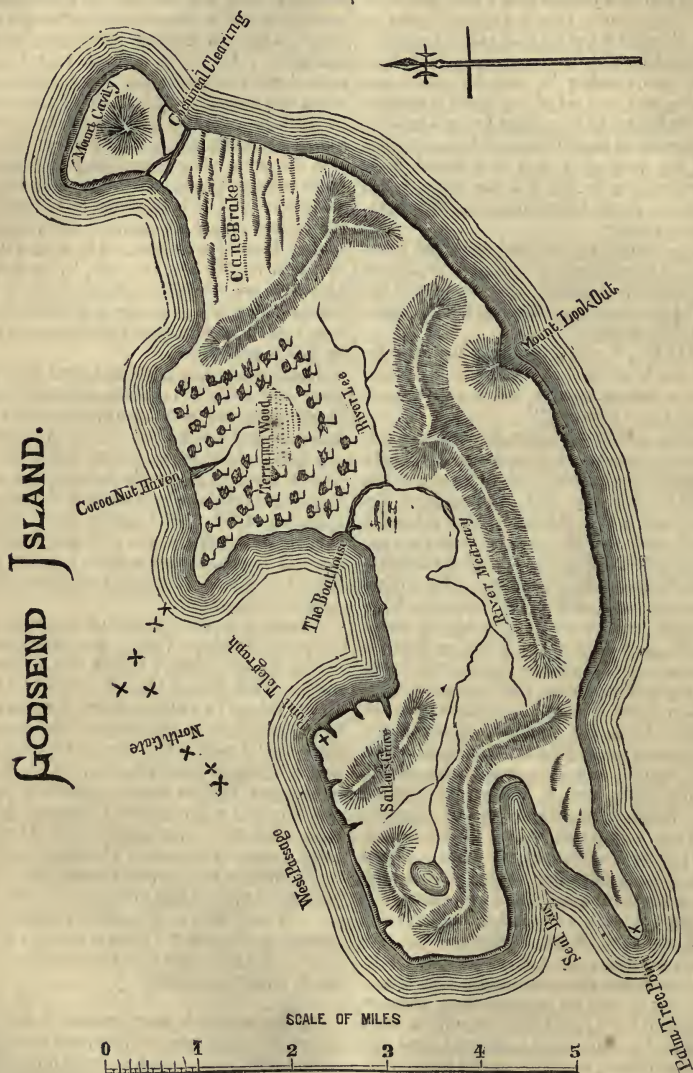
Relieved of other immediate cares, Hazel's mind had time to dwell upon the problem Helen had set him; and one fine day a conviction struck him that he had taken a narrow and puc-

rile view of it, and that, after all, there must be in the nature of things some way to attract ships from a distance. Possessed with this thought, he went up to Telegraph Point, abstracted his mind from all external objects, and fixed it on this idea,—but came down as he went. He descended by some steps he had cut zigzag for Helen's use, and as he put his foot on the fifth step, —who—whir—whiz—came nine ducks, cool-

ing his head, they whizzed so close; and made right for the lagoons.

"Hum!" thought Hazel; "I never see you ducks fly in any other direction but that."

This speculation rankled in him all night, and he told Helen he should reconnoitre at daybreak, but should not take her, as there might be snakes. He made the boat ready at daybreak, and certain gannets, pintadoes, boobies, and nod-



dies, and divers with eyes in their heads like fiery jewels,—birds whose greedy maws he had often gratified,—chose to fancy he must be going a fishing, and were on the alert, and rather troublesome. However, he got adrift, and ran out through North Gate with a light westerly breeze, followed by a whole fleet of birds. These were joined in due course by another of his satellites, a young seal he called Tommy, also fond of fishing.

The feathered convoy soon tailed off; but

Tommy stuck to him for about eight miles. He ran that distance to have a nearer look at a small island which lay due north of Telegraph Point. He satisfied himself it was little more than a very long, large reef, the neighborhood of which ought to be avoided by ships of burden, and, resolving to set some beacon or other on it ere long, he christened it White Water Island, on account of the surf: he came about and headed for the East Bluff.

Then Tommy gave him up in disgust; perhaps thought his conduct vacillating. Animals all despise that.

He soon landed almost under the volcano, and moored his boat not far from a cliff peaked with guano. Exercising due caution this time, he got up to the lagoons, and found a great many ducks swimming about. He approached little parties to examine their varieties. They all swam out of his way; some of them even flew a few yards, and then settled. Not one would let him come within forty yards. This convinced Hazel the ducks were not natives of the island, but strangers, who were not much afraid, because they had never been molested on this particular island; but still distrusted man.

While he pondered thus, there was a great noise of wings, and about a dozen ducks flew over his head on the rise, and passed westward still rising till they got into the high currents, and away upon the wings of the wind for distant lands.

The grand rush of their wings, and the off-hand way in which they spurned, abandoned, and disappeared from an island that held him tight, made Hazel feel very small. His thoughts took the form of Satire. "Lords of the creation, are we? We sink in water; in air we tumble; on earth we stumble."

These pleasing reflections did not prevent his taking their exact line of flight, and barking a tree to mark it. He was about to leave the place, when he heard a splashing not far from him, and there was a duck jumping about on the water in a strange way. Hazel thought a snake had got hold of her, and ran to her assistance. He took her out of the water and soon found what was the matter; her bill was open, and a fish's tail was sticking out. Hazel inserted his finger and dragged out a small fish which had erected the spines on its back so opportunely as nearly to kill its destroyer. The duck recovered enough to quack in a feeble and dubious manner. Hazel kept her for Helen, because she was a plain brown duck. With some little reluctance he slightly shortened one wing, and stowed away his captive in the hold of the boat.

He happened to have a great stock of pitch in the boat, so he employed a few hours in writing upon the guano rocks. On one he wrote in huge letters:—

AN ENGLISH LADY WRECKED HERE. HASTE
TO HER RESCUE.

On another he wrote in small letters:—

BEWARE THE REEFS ON THE NORTH SIDE.
LIE OFF FOR SIGNALS.

Then he came home and beached the boat, and brought Helen his captive.

"Why it is an English duck!" she cried, and was enraptured.

By this visit to the lagoons, Hazel gathered that this island was a half-way house for migrating birds, especially ducks; and he inferred that the line those vagrants had taken was the shortest way from this island to the nearest land. This was worth knowing, and set his brain working. He begged Helen to watch for the return of the turtle-doves (they had all left the island just before the rain) and learn, if possible, from what point of the compass they arrived.

The next expedition was undertaken to please

Helen; she wished to examine the beautiful creeks and caves on the north side, which they had seen from a distance when they sailed round the island.

They started on foot one delightful day, and walked briskly, for the air, though balmy, was exhilarating. They followed the course of the river till they came to the lake that fed it, and was fed itself by hundreds of little natural gutters down which the hills discharged the rains. This was new to Helen, though not to Hazel: she produced the map, and told the lake slyly that it was incorrect, a little too big. She took some of the water in her hand, sprinkled the lake with it, and called it Hazelmere. They bore a little to the right, and proceeded till they found a creek shaped like a wedge, at whose broad end shone an arch of foliage studded with flowers, and the sparkling blue water peeped behind. This was tempting, but the descent was rather hazardous at first; great square blocks of rock, one below another, and these rude steps were coated with mosses of rich hue, but wet and slippery; Hazel began to be alarmed for his companion. However, after one or two difficulties, the fissure opened wider to the sun, and they descended from the slimy rocks into a sloping hot-bed of exotic flowers, and those huge succulent leaves that are the glory of the tropics. The ground was carpeted a yard deep with their luxuriance, and others, more aspiring, climbed the warm sides of the diverging cliffs, just as creepers go up a wall, lining every crevice as they rose. In this blessed spot, warmed, yet not scorched, by the tropical sun, and fed with trickling waters, was seen what marvels "boon Nature" can do. Here our vegetable dwarfs were giants, and our flowers were trees. One lovely giantess of the jasmine tribe, but with flowers shaped like a marigold, and scented like a tuberose, had a stem as thick as a poplar, and carried its thousand buds and amber-colored flowers up eighty feet of broken rock, and planted on every ledge suckers, that flowered again, and filled the air with perfume. Another tree about half as high was covered with a cascade of snow-white tulips, each as big as a small flower-pot, and scented like honeysuckle. An aloe, ten feet high, blossomed in a corner, unheeded among loftier beauties. And at the very mouth of the fissure a huge banana leaned across, and flung out its vast leaves, that seemed translucent gold against the sun; under it shone a monstrous cactus in all her pink and crimson glory, and through the maze of color streamed the deep blue of the peaceful ocean, laughing, and catching sunbeams.

Helen leaned against the cliff and quivered with delight, and that deep sense of flowers that belongs to your true woman.

Hazel feared she was ill.

"Ill?" said she. "Who could be ill here? It is heaven upon earth. Oh, you dears! Oh, you loves! And they all seemed growing on the sea, and floating in the sun."

"And it is only one of a dozen such," said Hazel. "If you would like to inspect them at your leisure, I'll just run to Palm-tree Point; for my signal is all askew. I saw that as we came along."

Helen assented readily, and he ran off; but left her the provisions. She was not to wait dinner for him.

Helen examined two or three of the flowery fissures, and found fresh beauties in each, and also some English leaves, that gave her pleasure of another kind; and, after she had revelled in the flowers, she examined the shore, and soon discovered that the rocks which abounded here (though there were also large patches of clear sand) were nearly all pure coral, in great variety. Red coral was abundant; and even the pink coral, to which fashion was just then giving a fictitious value, was there by the ton. This interested her, and so did some beautiful shells that lay sparkling. The time passed swiftly; and she was still busy in her researches, when suddenly it darkened a little, and, looking back, she saw a white vapor stealing over the cliff, and curling down.

Upon this she thought it prudent to return to the place where Hazel had left her; the more so as it was near sunset.

The vapor descended and spread and covered the sea and land. Then the sun set: and it was darkness visible. Coming from the south, the sea-fret caught Hazel sooner and in a less favorable situation. Returning from the palm-tree, he had taken the shortest cut through a small jungle, and been so impeded by the scrub that, when he got clear, the fog was upon him. Between that and the river he lost his way several times, and did not hit the river till near midnight. He followed the river to the lake, and coasted the lake, and then groped his way towards the creek. But, after a while, every step he took was fraught with danger; and the night was far advanced when he at last hit off the creek, as he thought. He hallooed; but there was no reply; hallooed again, and, to his joy, her voice replied; but at a distance. He had come to the wrong creek. She was farther westward. He groped his way westward, and came to another creek. He hallooed to her, and she answered him. But to attempt the descent would have been mere suicide. She felt that herself, and almost ordered him to stay where he was.

"Why, we can talk all the same," said she, "and it is not for long."

It was a curious position, and one typical of the relation between them. So near together, yet the barrier so strong.

"I am afraid you must be very cold," said he.

"Oh no; I have my seal-skin jacket on; and it is so sheltered here. I wish you were as well off."

"You are not afraid to be alone down there?"

"I am not alone when your voice is near me. Now don't you fidget yourself, dear friend. I like these little excitements. I have told you so before. Listen: how calm and silent it all is; the place; the night! The mind seems to fill with great ideas, and to feel its immortality."

She spoke with solemnity, and he heard in silence.

Indeed it was a reverend time and place: the sea, whose loud and penetrating tongue had, in some former age, created the gully where they both sat apart, had of late years receded, and kissed the sands gently that calm night: so gently, that its long, low murmur seemed the echo of tranquillity.

The voices of that pair sounded supernatural, one speaking up, and the other down, and the speakers quite invisible.

"Mr. Hazel," said Helen in a low, earnest voice; "they say that night gives wisdom even to the wise; think now, and tell me your true thoughts. Has the foot of man ever trod upon this island before?"

There was a silence due to a question so grave, and put with solemnity, at a solemn time, in a solemn place.

At last Hazel's thoughtful voice came down. "The world is very, very, very old. So old, that the words 'Ancient History' are a falsehood, and Moses wrote but as yesterday. And man is a very old animal upon this old, old planet; and has been everywhere. I can not doubt he has been here."

Her voice went up. "But have you seen any signs?"

His voice came down. "I have not looked for them. The bones and the weapons of primeval man are all below earth's surface at this time of day."

There was a dead silence. Then Helen's voice went up again. "But in modern times? Has no man landed here from far-off places, since ships were built?"

The voice came sadly down. "I do not know."

The voice went up. "But think!"

The voice came down. "What calamity can be new in a world so old as this? Every thing we can do, and suffer, others of our race have done, and suffered."

The voice went up. "Hush! there's something moving on the sand."

CHAPTER XXXV.

HAZEL waited and listened. So did Helen, and her breath came fast; for in the stillly night she heard light but mysterious sounds. Something was moving on the sand very slowly and softly, but nearer and nearer. Her heart began to leap. She put out her hand instinctively to clutch Mr. Hazel; but he was too far off. She had the presence of mind and the self-denial to disguise her fears; for she knew he would come headlong to her assistance.

She said in a quivering whisper, "I'm not frightened; only v—very c—curious."

And now she became conscious that not only one but several things were creeping about.

Presently the creeping ceased, and was followed by a louder and more mysterious noise. In that silent night it sounded like raking and digging. Three or four mysterious visitants seemed to be making graves.

This was too much; especially coming as it did after talk about the primeval dead. Her desire to scream was so strong, and she was so afraid Hazel would break his neck if she relieved her mind in that way, that she actually took her handkerchief and bit it hard.

But this situation was cut short by a beneficent luminary. The sun rose with a magnificent bound,—it was his way in that latitude,—and every thing unpleasant winced that moment; the fog shivered in its turn, and appeared to open in furrows as great javelins of golden light shot through it from the swiftly rising orb. Soon those golden darts increased to streams of

portable fire, that burst the fog and illumined the wet sands; and Helen burst out laughing like a chanticleer, for this first break of day revealed the sextons that had scared her,—three ponderous turtles, crawling, slow and clumsy, back to sea. Hazel joined her, and they soon found what these evil spirits of the island had been at, poor wretches. They had each buried a dozen eggs in the sand: one dozen of which were very soon set boiling. At first, indeed, Helen objected that they had no shells, but Hazel told her she might as well complain of a rose without a thorn. He assured her turtles' eggs were a known delicacy, and very superior to birds' eggs; and so she found them; they were eaten with the keenest relish.

"And now," said Helen, "for my discoveries. First, here are my English leaves, only bigger. I found them on a large tree."

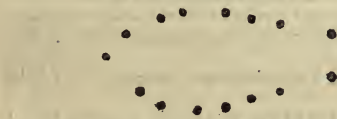
"English leaves!" cried Hazel, with rapture.

"Why, it is the caoutchouc!"

"Oh dear," said Helen, disappointed; "I took it for the India-rubber tree."

"It is the India-rubber tree; and I have been hunting for it all over the island in vain, and using wretchedly inferior gums for want of it."

"I'm so glad," said Helen. "And now I have something else to show you: something that curdled my blood; but I dare say I was very foolish." She then took him half across the sand and pointed out to him a number of stones dotted over the sand in a sort of oval. These stones, streaked with sea grass, and incrustated with small shells, were not at equal distances, but yet, allowing for gaps, they formed a decided figure. Their outlines resembled a great fish, wanting the tail.



"Can this be chance?" asked Helen; "oh, if it should be what I fear, and that is—Savages!"

Hazel considered it attentively a long time. "Too far at sea for living savages," said he. "And yet it can not be chance. What on earth is it? It looks Druidical. But how can that be? The island was smaller when these were placed here than it is now." He went nearer and examined one of the stones; then he scraped away the sand from its base, and found it was not shaped like a stone, but more like a whale's rib. He became excited; went on his knees, and tore the sand up with his hands. Then he rose up agitated, and traced the outline again. "Great Heaven!" said he, "why, it is a ship."

"A ship!"

"Ay," said he, standing in the middle of it; "here, beneath our feet, lies man; with his work, and his treasures. This carcass has been here for many a long year; not so very long, neither; she is too big for the 16th century, and yet she must have been sunk when the island was smaller. I take it to be a Spanish or Portuguese ship; probably one of those treasure-ships our commodores, and chartered

pirates, and the American buccaneers, used to chase about these seas. Here lie her bones, and the bones of her crew. Your question was soon answered. All that we can say has been said; can do has been done; can suffer has been suffered."

They were silent, and the sunk ship's bones moved them strangely. In their deep isolation from the human race, even the presence of the dead brought humanity somehow nearer to them.

They walked thoughtfully away, and made across the sands for Telegraph Point.

Before they got home, Helen suggested that perhaps, if he were to dig in the ship, he might find something useful.

He shook his head. "Impossible! The iron has all melted away like sugar long before this. Nothing can have survived but gold and silver, and they are not worth picking up, much less digging for; my time is too precious. No, you have found two buried treasures to-day,—turtles' eggs, and a ship, freighted, as I think, with what men call the precious metals. Well, the eggs are gold, and the gold is a drug,—there it will lie for me."

Both discoveries bore fruits. The ship: Hazel made a vow that never again should any poor ship lay her ribs on this island for want of warning. He buoyed the reefs. He ran out to White Water Island, and wrote an earnest warning on the black reef, and this time he wrote with white on black. He wrote a similar warning, with black on white, at the western extremity of Godsend Island.

The eggs: Hazel watched for the turtles at daybreak; turned one now and then; and fed Helen on the meat or its eggs, morn, noon, and night.

For some time she had been advancing in health and strength. But when the rains declined considerably, and she was all day in the air, she got the full benefit of the wonderful climate, and her health, appetite, and muscular vigor became truly astonishing; especially under what Hazel called the turtle cure; though, indeed, she was cured before. She ate three good meals a day, and needed them; for she was up with the sun, and her hands and feet never idle till he sat.

Four months on the island had done this. But four months had not shown those straining eyes the white speck on the horizon; the sail, so looked and longed for.

Hazel often walked the island by himself; not to explore, for he knew the place well by this time, but he went his rounds to see that all his signals were in working order.

He went to Mount Lookout one day with this view. It was about an hour before noon. Long before he got to the mountain he had scanned the horizon carefully, as a matter of course; but not a speck. So, when he got there, he did not look seaward, but just saw that his flagstaff was all right, and was about to turn away and go home, when he happened to glance at the water; and there, underneath him, he saw—a ship; standing towards the island.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

He started, and rubbed his eyes, and looked again. It was no delusion. Things never did come as they are expected to come. There was still no doubtful speck on the horizon; but within eight miles of the island,—and, in this lovely air, that looked nearly close,—was a ship, under canvas. She bore S.E. from Mount Lookout, and S.S.E. from the East Bluff of the island, towards which her course was apparently directed. She had a fair wind, but was not going fast; being heavily laden, and under no press of sail. A keen thrill went through him; and his mind was a whirl. He ran home with the great news.

But, even as he ran, a cold sickly feeling crawled over him.

"That ship parts her and me."

He resisted the feeling as a thing too monstrous and selfish, and resisted it so fiercely, that, when he got to the slopes and saw Helen busy at her work, he waved his hat and hurried again and again, and seemed almost mad with triumph.

Helen stood transfixed, she had never seen him in such a state.

"Good news!" he cried; "great news! A ship in sight! You are rescued!"

Her heart leaped into her mouth.

"Aship!" she screamed. "Where? Where?"

He came up to her panting.

"Close under the island. Hid by the bluff; but you will see her in half an hour. God be praised! Get every thing ready to go. Hurrah! This is our last day on the island."

The words were brave, and loud, and boisterous, but the face was pale and drawn, and Helen saw it, and, though she hustled and got ready to leave, the tears were in her eyes. But the event was too great to be resisted. A wild excitement grew on them both. They ran about like persons crazed, and took things up, and laid them down again, scarcely knowing what they were doing. But presently they were sobered a little, for the ship did not appear. They ran across the sands, where they could see the bluff, she ought to have passed that half an hour ago.

Hazel thought she must have anchored.

Helen looked at him steadily.

"Dear friend," said she, "are you sure there is a ship at all? Are you not under a delusion? This island fills the mind with fancies. One day I thought I saw a ship sailing in the sky. Ah!" She uttered a faint scream, for while she was speaking the bowsprit and jib of a vessel glided past the bluff, so closely they seemed to scrape it, and a ship emerged grandly, and glided along the cliff.

"Are they mad," cried Hazel, "to hug the shore like that? Ah! they have seen my warning."

And it appeared so, for the ship just then came up in the wind several points, and left the bluff dead astern.

She sailed a little way on that course and then paid off again, and seemed inclined to range along the coast. But presently she was up in the wind again, and made a greater offing. She was sailed in a strange, vacillating way; but Hazel ascribed this to her people's fear of the reefs he had indicated to all comers. The better to watch her manœuvres, and signal her if necessary,

they both went up to Telegraph Point. They could not go out to her, being low water. Seen from this height, the working of this vessel was unaccountable. She was to and off the wind as often as if she was drunk herself, or commanded by a drunken skipper. However, she was kept well clear of the home reefs, and made a good offing, and so at last she opened the bay heading N.W., and distant four miles, or thereabouts. Now was the time to drop her anchor. So Hazel worked the telegraph to draw her attention, and waved his hat and hand to her. But the ship sailed on. She yawed immensely, but she kept her course; and, when she had gone a mile or two more, the sickening truth forced itself at last upon those eager watchers. She had decided not to touch at the island. In vain their joyful signals. In vain the telegraph. In vain that cry for help upon the eastern cliff: it had saved her, but not pleaded for them. The monsters saw them on the height,—their hope, their joy,—saw and abandoned them.

They looked at one another with dilating eyes, to read in a human face whether such a deed as this could really be done by man upon his fellow. Then they uttered wild cries to the receding vessel.

Vain, vain, all was in vain.

Then they sat down stupefied, but still glaring at the ship, and each at the same moment held out a hand to the other, and they sat hand in hand all the world to each other just then, for there was the world in sight abandoning them in cold blood.

"Be calm, dear friend," said Helen, patiently.

"Oh, my poor father!" And her other hand threw her apron over her head, and then came a burst of anguish that no words could utter.

At this Hazel started to his feet in fury.

"Now may the God that made sea and land judge between those miscreants there and you!"

"Be patient," said Helen, sobbing. "Oh, be patient."

"No! I will not be patient," roared Hazel. "Judge thou her cause, O! God; each of these tears against a reptile's soul!"

And so he stood glaring, and his hair blowing wildly to the breeze; while she sighed patiently at his knee.

Presently he began to watch the vessel with a grim and bitter eye. Anon he burst out suddenly, "Aha! that is right. Well steered. Don't cry, sweet one; our cause is heard. Are they blind? Are they drunk? Are they sick? I see nobody on deck! Perhaps I have been too—God forgive me, the ship's ashore!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HELEN looked up; and there was the ship fast, and on her side. She was on the White Water Reef. Not upon the black rocks themselves, but on a part of them that was under water.

Hazel ran down to the beach; and there Helen found him greatly agitated. All his anger was gone; he had but one thought now,—to go out to her assistance. But it still wanted an hour to high water, and it was blowing smartly, and there was nearly always a surf upon that reef.

What if the vessel should break up, and lives be lost?

He paced the sands like a wild beast in its cage, in an agony of pity, remorse, and burning impatience. His feelings became intolerable; he set his back to the boat, and with herculean strength forced it down a little way to meet the tide. He got logs and put them down for rollers. He strove, he strained, he struggled, till his face and hands were purple. And at last he met the flowing tide, and in a moment jumped into the boat, and pushed off. Helen begged with sparkling eyes to be allowed to accompany him.

"What, to a ship smitten with scurvy or Heaven knows what? Certainly not. Besides, you would be wet through: it is blowing rather fresh, and I shall carry on. Pray for the poor souls I go to help; and for me, who have sinned in my anger."

He hoisted his sail, and ran out.

Helen stood on the bank, and watched him with tender admiration. How good and brave he was! And he could go into a passion too, when she was wronged, or when he thought she was. Well! she admired him none the less for that. She watched him at first with admiration, but soon with anxiety; for he had no sooner passed North Gate, than the cutter, having both sails set, though reefed, lay down very much, and her hull kept disappearing. Helen felt anxious, and would have been downright frightened, but for her confidence in his prowess.

By-and-by only her staggering sails were visible; and the sun set ere she reached the creek. The wind declined with the sun, and Helen made two great fires, and prepared food for the sufferers; for she made sure Hazel would bring them off in a few hours more. She promised herself the happiness of relieving the distressed. But to her infinite surprise she found herself almost regretting that the island was likely to be peopled with strangers. No matter, she should sit up for them all night, and be very kind to them, poor things; though they had not been very kind to her.

About midnight the wind shifted to the north-west, and blew hard.

Helen ran down to the shore and looked seaward. This was a fair wind for Hazel's return; and she began to expect him every hour. But no; he delayed unaccountably.

And the worst of it was, it began to blow a gale; and this wind sent the sea rolling into the bay in a manner that alarmed her seriously.

The night wore on; no signs of the boat; and now there was a heavy gale outside, and a great sea rolling in, brown and foaming.

Day broke, and showed the sea for a mile or two; the rest was hidden by driving rain.

Helen kneeled on the shore and prayed for him.

Dire misgivings oppressed her. And soon these were heightened to terror; for the sea began to disgorge things of a kind that had never come ashore before. A great ship's mast came tossing: huge as it was, the waves handled it like a toy. Then came a barrel; then a broken spar. These were but the forerunners of more fearful havoc.

The sea became strewed and literally blackened with fragments; part wreck, part cargo, of a broken vessel.

But what was all this compared with the horror that followed?

A black object caught her eye; driven in upon the crest of the wave.

She looked, with her hair flying straight back, and her eyes almost starting from her head.

It was a boat, bottom up; driven on, and tossed like a cork.

It came nearer, nearer, nearer.

She dashed into the water with a wild scream, but a wave beat her backward on the sand, and, as she rose, an enormous roller lifted the boat upright into the air, and, breaking, dashed it keel uppermost on the beach at her side—empty!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HELEN uttered a shriek of agony, and her knees smote together, and she would have swooned on the spot but for the wind and the spray that beat against her.

To the fearful stun succeeded the wildest distress. She ran to and fro like some wild animal bereaved; she kept wringing her hands and uttering cries of pity and despair, and went back to the boat a hundred times; it held her by a spell.

It was long before she could think connectedly, and, even then, it was not of herself, nor of her lonely state, but only, Why did not she die with him? Why did she not die instead of him?

He had been all the world to her; and now she knew it. Oh, what a friend, what a champion, what a lover these cruel waves had destroyed!

The morning broke, and still she hovered and hovered about the fatal boat with great horror-stricken eyes, and hair flying to the breeze; and not a tear. If she could only have smoothed his last moments, have spoken one word into his dying ear! But no! Her poor hero had died in going to save others; died thinking her as cold as the waters that had destroyed him.

Dead or alive, he was all the world to her now. She went, wailing piteously, and imploring the waves to give her at least his dead body to speak to and mourn over. But the sea denied her even that dismal consolation.

The next tide brought in a few more fragments of the wreck, but no corpse floated ashore.

Then, at last, as the waves once more retired, leaving, this time, only petty fragments of wreck on the beach, she lifted up her voice and almost wept her heart out of her body.

Such tears as these are seldom without effect on the mind: and Helen now began to rebel, though faintly, against despair. She had been quite crushed, at first, under the material evidence—the boat driven empty by the very wind and waves that had done the cruel deed. But the heart is averse to believe calamity, and especially bereavement; and very ingenious in arguing against that bitterest of all woes. So she now sat down and brooded, and her mind fastened with pathetic ingenuity on every circumstance that could bear a favorable construction. The mast had not been broken; how, then, had it been lost? The body had not come ashore. He had had time to get to the wreck before the gale from the north came on at all: and why should a fair wind, though powerful, upset the boat?

On these slender things she began to build a superstructure of hope; but soon her heart interrupted the reasoning. "What would *he* do in my place? would he sit guessing while hope had a hair to hang by?" That thought struck her like a spur: and in a moment she bounded into action, erect, her lips fixed, and her eye on fire, though her cheek was very pale. She went swiftly to Hazel's store, and searched it; there she found the jib-sail, a boat-hook, some rope, and one little oar, that Hazel was making for her, and had not quite completed. The sight of this, his last work, overpowered her again; and she sat down and took it on her knees and kissed it, and cried over it. And these tears weakened her for a time. She felt it, and had the resolution to leave the oar behind. A single oar was of no use to row with. She rigged the boat-hook as a mast, and fastened the sail to it; and, with this poor equipment, she actually resolved to put out to sea.

The wind still blew smartly, and there was no blue sky visible.

And now she remembered she had eaten nothing; that would not do. Her strength might fail her. She made ready a meal, and ate it almost fiercely, and by a pure effort of resolution, as she was doing all the rest.

By this time, it was nearly high tide. She watched the water creeping up. Will it float the boat? It rises over the keel; two inches, three inches. Five inches water! Now she pushes with all her strength. No; the boat has water in it she has forgotten to bale out. She strained every nerve, but could not move it. She stopped to take breath and husband her strength. But, when she renewed her efforts, the five inches were four, and she had the misery of seeing the water crawl away by degrees, and leave the boat high and dry.

She sighed, heart-broken, awhile; then went home and prayed.

When she had prayed a long time for strength and wisdom, she lay down for an hour, and tried to sleep, but failed. Then she prepared for a more serious struggle with the many difficulties she had to encounter. Now she thanked God more than ever for the health and rare strength she had acquired in this island: without them she could have done nothing now. She got a clay platter, and baled the vessel nearly dry. She left a little water for ballast. She fortified herself with food, and put provisions and water on board the boat. In imitation of Hazel, she went and got two round logs, and, as soon as the tide crawled up to four inches, she lifted the bow a little, and got a roller under. Then she went to the boat's stern, set her teeth, and pushed with a rush of excitement that gave her almost a man's strength.

The stubborn boat seemed elastic, and all but moved. Then instinct taught her where her true strength lay. She got to the stern of the boat, and, setting the small of her back under the projecting gunwale, she gathered herself together and gave a superb heave, that moved the boat a foot. She followed it up and heaved again with like effect. Then, with a cry of joy, she ran and put down another roller forward. The boat was now on two rollers: one more magnificent heave with all her zeal, and strength, and youth, and the boat glided forward. She turned and rushed at it as it went, and the water deepening,

and a gust catching the sail, it went out to sea, and she had only just time to throw herself across the gunwale panting. She was afloat. The wind was S.W., and before she knew where she was the boat headed toward the home reefs, and slipped through the water pretty fast, considering how small a sail she carried. She ran to the helm. Alas! the rudder was broken off above the water line. The helm was a mockery, and the boat running for the reefs. She slackened the sheet, and the boat lost her way, and began to drift with the tide, which luckily had not yet turned. It carried her in shore.

Helen cast her eyes around her for an expedient, and she unshipped one of the transoms, and by trailing over the side, and alternately slacking and hauling the sheet, she contrived to make the boat crawl like a winged bird through the western passage. After that it soon got becalmed under the cliff, and drifted into two feet water.

Instantly she tied a rope to the mast, got out into the water, and took the rope ashore. She tied it round a heavy barrel she found there, and set the barrel up, and heaped stones round it and on it, which, unfortunately, was a long job, though she worked with feverish haste; then she went round the point, sometimes wet and sometimes dry, for the little oar she had left behind because it broke her heart to look at. Away with such weakness now! With that oar, his last work, she might steer if she could not row. She got it. She came back to the boat to re-commence her voyage.

She found the boat all safe, but in six inches of water, and the tide going out. So ended her voyage; four hundred yards at most, and then to wait another twelve hours for the tide.

It was too cruel: and every hour so precious: for, even if Hazel was alive, he would die of cold and hunger ere she could get to him. She cried like any woman.

She persisted like a man.

She made several trips, and put away things in the boat that could possibly be of use,—abundant provision, and a keg of water; Hazel's wooden spade to paddle or steer with; his basket of tools, etc. Then she snatched some sleep; but it was broken by sad and terrible dreams: then she waited in an agony of impatience for high water.

We are not always the best judges of what is good for us. Probably these delays saved her own life. She went out at last under far more favorable circumstances—a light westerly breeze, and no reefs to pass through. She was, however, severely incommoded with a ground-swell.

At first she steered with the spade as well as she could; but she found this was not sufficient. The current ran westerly, and she was drifting out of her course. Then she remembered Hazel's lessons, and made shift to fasten the spade to the helm, and then lashed the helm. Even this did not quite do; so she took her little oar, kissed it, cried over it a little, and then pulled manfully with it so as to keep the true course. It was a muggy day, neither wet nor dry. White Water Island was not in sight from Godsend Island; but, as soon as she lost the latter, the former became visible,—an ugly grinning reef, with an eternal surf on the south and western sides.

Often she left off rowing, and turned to look at it. It was all black and blank, except the white and fatal surf.

When she was about four miles from the nearest part of the reef, there was a rush and bubble in the water, and a great shark came after the boat. Helen screamed, and turned very cold. She dreaded the monster, not for what he could do now, but for what he might have done. He seemed to know the boat, he swam so vigilantly behind it. Was he there when the boat upset with Hazel in it? Was it in his greedy maw the remains of her best friend must be sought? Her lips opened, but no sound. She shuddered and hid her face at this awful thought.

The shark followed steadily.

She got to the reef, but did not hit it off as she intended. She ran under its lee, lowered the little sail, and steered the boat into a nick where the shark could hardly follow her.

But he moved to and fro like a sentinel, while she landed in trepidation and secured the boat to the branches of a white coral rock.

She found the place much larger than it looked from Telegraph Point. It was an archipelago of coral reef incrustured here and there with shells. She could not see all over it, where she was, so she made for what seemed the highest part, a bleak, sea-weedy mound, with some sandy hillocks about it. She went up to this, and looked eagerly all round.

Not a soul.

She called as loud as her sinking heart would let her.

Not a sound.

She felt very sick, and sat down upon the mound.

When she had yielded awhile to the weakness of her sex, she got up, and was her father's daughter again. She set to work to examine every foot of the reef.

It was no easy task. The rocks were rugged and sharp in places, slippery in others; often she had to go about, and once she fell and hurt her pretty hands and made them bleed; she never looked at them, nor heeded, but got up and sighed at the interruption: then patiently persisted. It took her two hours to examine thus, in detail, one half the island; but at last she discovered something. She saw at the eastern side of the reef a wooden figure of a woman, and, making her way to it, found the figure-head and a piece of the bow of the ship, with a sail on it, and a yard on that. This fragment was wedged into an angle of the reef, and the seaward edge of it shattered in a way that struck terror to Helen, for it showed how how omnipotent the sea had been. On the reef itself she found a cask with its head stove in, also a little keg and two wooden chests or cases. But what was all this to her?

She sat down again, for her knees failed her. Presently there was a sort of moan near her, and a seal splashed into the water and dived out of her sight. She put her hands on her heart, and bowed her head down, utterly desolate. She sat thus for a long time indeed, until she was interrupted by a most unexpected visitor.

Something came sniffing up to her and put a cold nose to her hand. She started violently, and both her hands were in the air in a moment.

It was a dog, a pointer. He whimpered and tried to gambol, but could not manage it; he was too weak. However, he contrived to let her see, with the wagging of his tail and a certain contemporaneous twist of his emaciated body, that she was welcome. But, having performed this ceremony, he trotted feebly away, leaving her very much startled, and not knowing what to think; indeed, this incident set her trembling all over.

A dog saved from the wreck! Then why not a man? And why not that life? Oh, thought she, would God save that creature, and not pity my poor angel and me?

She got up animated with hope, and recommenced her researches. She now kept at the outward edge of the island, and so went all round till she reached her boat again. The shark was swimming to and fro, waiting for her with horrible pertinacity. She tried to eat a mouthful, but, though she was faint, she could not eat. She drank a mouthful of water, and then went to search the very small portion that remained of the reef, and to take the poor dog home with her, because he she had lost was so good to animals. Only his example is left me, she said; and with that came another burst of sorrow. But she got up and did the rest of her work, crying as she went. After some severe travelling she got near the north-east limit, and in a sort of gully she saw the dog, quietly seated high on his tail. She called him; but he never moved. So then she went to him, and, when she got near him, she saw why he would not come. He was watching. Close by him lay the form of a man nearly covered with sea-weed. The feet were visible, and so was the face, the latter deadly pale. It was he. In a moment she was by him, and leaning over him with both hands quivering. Was he dead? No; his eyes were closed; he was fast asleep.

Her hands flew to his face to feel him alive, and then grasped both his hands and drew them up towards her panting bosom; and the tears of joy streamed from her eyes, as she sobbed and murmured over him, she knew not what. At that he awoke and stared at her. He uttered a loud ejaculation of joy and wonder, then, taking it all in, burst into tears himself and fell to kissing her hands and blessing her. The poor soul had almost given himself up for lost. And to be saved, all in a moment, and by her!

They could neither of them speak, but only mingled tears of joy and gratitude.

Hazel recovered himself first, and, rising somewhat stiffly, lent her his arm. Her father's spirit went out of her in the moment of victory, and she was all woman,—sweet, loving, clinging woman. She got hold of his hand as well as his arm, and cluded it so tight, her little grasp seemed velvet and steel.

"Let me feel you," said she: "but no words! no words!"

He supported his preserver tenderly to the boat, then, hoisting the sail, he fetched the east side in two tacks, shipped the sail and yard, and also the cask, keg, and boxes. He then put a great quantity of loose oysters on board, each, as large as a plate. She looked at him with amazement.

"What," said she, when he had quite loaded the boat, "only just out of the jaws of death,

and yet you can trouble your head about oysters and things."

"Wait till you see what I shall do with them," said he. "These are pearl oysters. I gathered them for *you*, when I had little hope I should ever see you again to give them you."

This was an unlucky speech. The act, that seemed so small and natural a thing to him, the woman's heart measured more correctly. Something rose in her throat; she tried to laugh instead of crying, and so she did both, and went into a violent fit of hysterics that showed how thoroughly her nature had been stirred to its depths. She quite frightened Hazel; and, indeed, the strength of an excited woman's weakness is sometimes alarming to manly natures.

He did all he could to soothe her; without much success. As soon as she was better he set sail, thinking home was the best place for her. She leant back exhausted, and, after a while, seemed to be asleep. We don't believe she was, but Hazel did; and sat, cold and aching in body, but warm at heart, worshipping her with all his eyes.

At last they got ashore; and he sat by her fire and told her all, while she cooked his supper and warmed clothes at the fire for him.

"The ship," said he, "was a Dutch vessel, bound from Batavia to Callao, that had probably gone on her beam-ends, for she was full of water. Her crew had abandoned her; I think they underrated the buoyancy of the ship and cargo. They left the poor dog on board. Her helm was lashed a-weather a couple of turns, but why that was done I can not tell for the life of me. I boarded her; unshipped my mast, and moored the boat to the ship; fed the poor dog; rummaged in the hold, and contrived to hoist up a small cask of salted beef, and a keg of rum, and some cases of grain and seeds. I managed to slide these on to the reef by means of the mast and oar lashed together. But a roller ground the wreck farther on to the reef, and the sudden snap broke the rope, as I suppose, and the boat went to sea. I never knew the misfortune till I saw her adrift. I could have got over that by making a raft; but the gale from the north brought such a sea on us. I saw she must break up, so I got ashore how I could. Ah, I little thought to see your face again, still less that I should owe my life to you."

"Spare me," said Helen faintly.

"What, must not I thank you even for my life?"

"No. *The account is far from even yet.*"

"You are no arithmetician to say so. What astonishes me most is, that you have never once scolded me for all the trouble and anxiety—"

"I am too happy to see you sitting there, to scold you. But still I do ask you to leave the sea alone after this. The treacherous monster! Oh, think what you and I have suffered on it."

She seemed quite worn out. He saw that, and retired for the night, casting one more wistful glance on her. But at that moment she was afraid to look at him. Her heart was welling over with tenderness for the dear friend whose life she had saved.

Next morning Hazel rose at daybreak as usual, but found himself stiff in the joints, and with a pain in his back. The mat that hung at the

opening of Helen's cave was not removed as usual. She was on her bed with a violent headache.

Hazel fed Ponto, and corrected him. He was at present a civilized dog; so he made a weak rush at the boobies and noddies directly.

He also smelt Tommy inquisitively, to learn was he an eatable. Tommy somehow divined the end of this sinister curiosity, and showed his teeth.

Then Hazel got a rope, and tied one end round his own waist, and one round Ponto's neck, and, at every outbreak of civilization, jerked him sharply on to his back. The effect of this discipline was rapid; Ponto soon found that he must not make war on the inhabitants of the island. He was a docile animal, and in a very short time consented to make one of "the happy family," as Hazel called the miscellaneous crew that beset him.

Helen and Hazel did not meet till past noon; and when they did meet it was plain she had been thinking a great deal, for her greeting was so shy and restrained as to appear cold and distant to Hazel. He thought to himself, I was too happy yesterday, and she too kind. Of course it could not last.

This change in her seemed to grow, rather than diminish. She carried it so far as to go and almost hide during the working hours. She made off to the jungle, and spent an unreasonable time there. She professed to be collecting cotton, and it must be admitted she brought a good deal home with her. But Hazel could not accept cotton as the only motive for this sudden separation.

He lost the light of her face till the evening. Then matters took another turn: she was too polite. Ceremony and courtesy appeared to be gradually encroaching upon tender friendship and familiarity: yet, now and then, her soft hazel eyes seemed to turn on him in silence, and say, forgive me all this. Then, at those sweet looks, love and forgiveness poured out of his eyes. And then hers sought the ground. And this was generally followed by a certain mixture of stiffness, timidity, and formality, too subtle to describe.

The much-enduring man began to lose patience.

"This is caprice," said he. "Cruel caprice."

Our female readers will probably take a deeper view of it than that. Whatever it was, another change was at hand. Since he was so exposed to the weather on the reef, Hazel had never been free from pain; but he had done his best to work it off. He had collected all the valuables from the wreck, made a new mast, set up a rude capstan to draw the boat ashore, and cut a little dock for her at low water, and clayed it in the full heat of the sun; and, having accomplished this drudgery, he got at last to his labor of love; he opened a quantity of pearl oysters, fed Tommy and the duck with them, and began the great work of lining the cavern with them. The said cavern was somewhat shell-shaped, and his idea was to make it out of a gloomy cavern into a vast shell, lined entirely, roof and sides, with glorious, sweet, prismatic mother-of-pearl, fresh from ocean. Well, one morning while Helen was in the jungle, he made a cement of guano, sand, clay, and water, nipped some shells to a shape with the pincers, and cemented them neatly, like mosaic almost;

but in the middle of his work he was cut down by the disorder he had combated so stoutly. He fairly gave in, and sat down groaning with pain. And in this state Helen found him.

"Oh, what is the matter?" said she.

He told her the truth, and said he had violent pains in the back and head. She did not say much, but she turned pale. She bustled and lighted a great fire, and made him lie down by it. She propped his head up; she set water on to boil for him, and would not let him move for any thing; and all the time her features were brimful of the loveliest concern. He could not help thinking how much better it was to be ill and in pain, and have her so kind, than to be well, and see her cold and distant. Towards evening he got better, or rather he mistook an intermission for cure, and retired to his boat; but she made him take her rug with him; and, when he was gone, she could not sleep for anxiety; and it cut her to the heart to think how poorly he was lodged compared with her.

Of all the changes fate could bring, this she had never dreamed of, that she should be so robust, and he should be sick and in pain.

She passed an uneasy, restless night, and long before morning she awoke for the sixth or seventh time, and she awoke with a misgiving in her mind, and some sound ringing in her ears. She listened and heard nothing; but in a few moments it began again.

"It was Hazel talking,—talking in a manner so fast, so strange, so loud that it made her blood run cold. It was the voice of Hazel, but not his mind.

She drew near, and, to her dismay, found him fever-stricken, and pouring out words with little sequence. She came close to him and tried to soothe him, but he answered her quite at random and went on flinging out the strangest things in stranger order. She trembled and waited for a lull, hoping then to soothe him with soft words and tones of tender pity.

"*Dens and caves!*" he roared, answering an imaginary detractor. "Well, never mind, love shall make that hole in the rock a palace for a queen; for a queen; for the queen. Here he suddenly changed characters, and fancied he was interpreting the discourse of another. "He means the Queen of the Fairies," said he, patronizingly: then, resuming his own character with loud defiance, "I say her chamber shall outshine the glories of the Alhambra, as far as the lilies outshone the artificial glories of King Solomon. Oh, mighty Nature, let others rely on the painter, the gold-beater, the carver of marble, come you and help me adorn the temple of my beloved. Amen."

(The poor soul thought, by the sound of his own words, it must be a prayer he uttered.)

And now Helen, with streaming eyes, tried to put in a word, but he stopped her with a wild hush! and went off into a series of mysterious whisperings. "Make no noise, please, or we shall frighten her. There—that is her window—no noise, please! I've watched and waited four hours, just to see her sweet, darling shadow on the blinds, and shall I lose it for your small talk? all paradoxes and platitudes! Excuse my plain speaking,—hush! here it comes,—her shadow—hush!—how my heart beats. It is gone. So now" (speaking out), "good-night,

base world! Do you hear? you company of liars, thieves, and traitors, called the world, go and sleep if you can. *I shall sleep*: because my conscience is clear. *False accusations!* Who can help them? They are the act of others. Read of Job, and Paul, and Joan of Arc. No, no, no, no; I didn't say read 'em out with those stentorian lungs. I must be allowed a little sleep, a man that wastes the midnight oil, yet brushes the early dew. Good-night."

He turned round and slept for several hours as he supposed; but in reality he was silent for just three seconds. "Well," said he, "and is a gardener a man to be looked down upon by upstarts? When Adam dived and Eve spun, where was then the gentleman? Why, where the spade was. Yet I went through the Herald's College, and not one of our mushroom aristocracy ('bloomed' I object to; they don't eat half as much as their footmen) had a spade for a crest. There's nothing ancient west of the Caspian. Well, all the better. For there's no fool like an old fool. A spade's a spade for a that, an a that, an a that, an a that—an a that,—an a that. Hallo! Stop that man; he's gone off on his cork leg, of a that, on a that—and it is my wish to be quiet. Allow me respectfully to observe," said he, striking off suddenly into an air of vast politeness, "that man requires change. I've done a jolly good day's work with the spade for this old Buffer, and now the intellect claims its turn. The mind retires above the noisy world to its Acropolis, and there discusses the great problem of the day; the Insular Enigma. To be or not to be, that is the question, I believe. No, it is not. That is fully discussed elsewhere. Hum! To diffuse—intelligence—from a fixed island—over one hundred leagues of water.

"It's a stinger. But I can't complain. I had read Lempriere, and Smith and Bryant, and mythology in general: yet I must go and fall in love with the Sphinx. Men are so vain. Vanity whispered she will set you a light one; why is a cobbler like a king, for instance? She is in love with you, ye fool, if you are with her. The harder the riddle the higher the compliment the Sphinx pays you. That is the way all sensible men look at it. She is not the Sphinx: she is an angel, and I call her my Lady Caprice. *Hate her for being Caprice!* You incorrigible muddle-head. Why, I love Caprice for being her shadow. Poor, impotent love that can't solve a problem. The only one she ever set me. I've gone about it like a fool. What is the use putting up little bits of telegraphs on the island? I'll make a kite a hundred feet high, get five miles of rope ready against the next hurricane; and then I'll rub it with phosphorus and fly it. But what can I fasten it to? No tree would hold it. Dunce! To the island itself, of course. And now go to Stantle, Magg, Melton, and Copestake for one thousand yards of silk,—*Money! Money! Money!* Well, give them a mortgage on the island, and a draft on the galleon. Now stop the pitch fountain, and bore a hole near it; fill fifty balloons with gas, inscribe them with the latitude and longitude, fly them, and bring all the world about our ears. The problem is solved. It is solved, and I am destroyed. She leaves me; she thinks no more of me. Her heart is in England."

Then he muttered for a long time unintelli-

gibly; and Helen ventured near, and actually laid her hand on his brow to soothe him. But suddenly his muttering ceased, and he seemed to be puzzling hard over something.

The result came out in a clear articulate sentence that made Helen recoil, and, holding by the mast, cast an indescribable look of wonder and dismay on the speaker.

The words that so staggered her were these to the letter.

"She says she hates reptiles. Yet she marries Arthur Wardlaw."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE very name of Arthur Wardlaw startled Helen, and made her realize how completely her thoughts had been occupied with another.

But add to that the strange and bitter epigram! Or was it a mere fortuitous concourse of words?

She was startled, amazed, confounded, puzzled. And, ere she could recover her composure, Hazel was back to his problem again: but no longer with the same energy.

He said in a faint and sleepy voice: "'He maketh the winds His messengers, and flames of fire His ministers.' Ah! if I could do that! Well, why not? I can do any thing she bids me,—

"Græculus esuriens cælum jusseris ibit."

And soon after this doughty declaration he dozed off, and forgot all his trouble for a while.

The sun rose, and still he slept, and Helen watched him with undisguised tenderness in her face; undisguised now that he could not see it.

Ere long she had companions in her care. Ponto came out of his den, and sniffed about the boat; and then began to scratch it, and whimper for his friend. Tommy swam out of the sea, came to the boat, discovered, Heaven knows how, that his friend was there, and, in the way of noises, did every thing but speak. The sea-birds followed and fluttered here and there in an erratic way, with now and then a peck at each other. All animated nature seemed to be uneasy at this eclipse of their Hazel.

At last Tommy raised himself quite perpendicular, in a vain endeavor to look into the boat, and invented a whine in the minor key, which tells on dogs: it set Ponto off in a moment; he sat upon his tail, and delivered a long and most deplorable howl.

"Every thing loves, him," thought Helen.

With Ponto's music Hazel awoke, and found her watching him, with tears in her eyes; he said softly: "Miss Rolleston! There is nothing the matter, I hope. Why am I not up getting things for your breakfast?"

"Dear friend," said she, "why you are not doing things for me and forgetting yourself is because you have been very ill. And I am your nurse. Now tell me what I shall get you. Is there nothing you could fancy?"

No; he had no appetite; she was not to trouble about him. And then he tried to get up; but that gave him such a pain in his loins, he was fain to lie down again. So then he felt that he had got rheumatic fever. He told her so; but, seeing her sweet anxious face, begged

her not to be alarmed,—he knew what to take for it. Would she be kind enough to go to his arsenal and fetch some specimens of bark she would find there, and also the keg of rum?"

She flew at the word, and soon made him an infusion of the barks in boiling water; to which the rum was added.

His sweet nurse administered this from time to time. The barks used were of the cassia-tree, and a wild citron-tree. Cinchona did not exist in this island, unfortunately. Perhaps there was no soil for it at a sufficient elevation above the sea.

Nevertheless with these inferior barks they held the fever in check. But the pain was obstinate, and cost Helen many a sigh; for, if she came softly, she could often hear him moan; and, the moment he heard her foot, he set to and whistled, for a blind; with what success may be imagined. She would have bought those pains, or a portion of them; ay, and paid a heavy price for them.

But pain, like every thing, intermits, and in those blessed intervals his mind was more active than ever, and ran a great deal upon what he called the Problem.

But she, who had set it him, gave him little encouragement now to puzzle over it.

The following may serve as a specimen of their conversation on that head.

"The air of this island," said he, "gives one a sort of vague sense of mental power. It leads to no result in my case: still, it is an agreeable sensation to have it floating across my mind that some day I shall solve the Great Problem. Ah! if I was only an inventor!"

"And so you are."

"No, no," said Hazel, disclaiming as earnestly as some people claim; "I do things that look like acts of invention, but they are acts of memory. I could show you plates and engravings of all the things I have seemed to invent. A man who studies books instead of skimming them can cut a dash in a desert island, until the fatal word goes forth—*invent*; and then you find him out."

"I am sure I wish I had never said the fatal word. You will never get well if you puzzle your brain over impossibilities."

"Impossibilities! But is not that begging the question? The measure of impossibilities is lost in the present age. I propose a test. Let us go back a century, and suppose that three problems were laid before the men of that day, and they were asked to decide which is the most impossible: 1st, to diffuse intelligence from a fixed island over a hundred leagues of water: 2d, to make the sun take in thirty seconds likenesses more exact than any portrait-painter ever took—likenesses that can be sold for a shilling at fifty per cent. profit: 3d, for New York and London to exchange words by wire so much faster than the earth can turn, that London shall tell New York at ten on Monday morning what was the price of consols at two o'clock Monday afternoon."

"That is a story," said Helen, with a look of angelic reproach.

"I accept that reply," said Hazel. "As for me, I have got a smattering of so many subjects all full of incredible truths, that my faith in the impossibility of any thing is gone. Ah! if

James Watt was only here instead of John Hazel,—James Watt from the Abbey, with a head as big as a pumpkin,—he would not have gone groping about the island, writing on rocks, and erecting signals. No; he would have had some grand and bold idea worthy of the proposition."

"Well, so I think," said Helen, archly; "that great man with the great head would have begun by making a kite a hundred yards high."

"Would he? Well, he was quite capable of it."

"Yes; and rubbed it with phosphorus, and flown it the first tempest, and made the string fast to—the island itself."

"Well, that is an idea," said Hazel, staring; "rather hyperbolic, I fear. But, after all, it is an idea."

"Or else," continued Helen, "he would weave a thousand yards of some light fabric, and make balloons; then he would stop the pitch-fountain, bore a hole in the rock near it, and so get the gas, fill the balloons, inscribe them with our sad story and our latitude and longitude, and send them flying all over the ocean,—there!"

Hazel was amazed.

"I resign my functions to you," said he. "What imagination! What invention!"

"Oh dear, no," said Helen, slyly; "acts of memory sometimes pass for invention, you know. Shall I tell you? when first you fell ill, you were rather light-headed, and uttered the strangest things. They would have made me laugh heartily, only I couldn't—for crying. And you said that about kites and balloons, every word."

"Did I? then I have most brains when I have least reason, that's all."

"Ay," said Helen, "and other strange things,—very strange and bitter things. One I should like to ask you about, what on earth you could mean by it; but perhaps you meant nothing, after all."

"I'll soon tell you," said Hazel; but he took the precaution to add, "provided I know what it means myself."

She looked at him steadily, and was on the point of seeking the explanation so boldly offered; but her own courage failed her. She colored and hesitated.

"I shall wait," said she, "till you are quite, quite well. That will be soon, I hope; only you must be good, and obey my prescriptions. Cultivate patience; it is a wholesome plant; bow the pride of that intellect which you see a fever can lay low in an hour; aspire no more beyond the powers of man. Here we shall stay unless Providence sends us a ship. I have ceased to repine; and don't you begin. Dismiss that problem altogether; see how hot it has made your poor brow. Be good now, and dismiss it; or else do as I do,—fold it up, put it quietly away in a corner of your mind, and, when you least expect, it will pop out solved."

[Oh, comfortable doctrine. But how about Jamie Watt's headaches? And why are the signs of hard thought so much stronger in his brow and face than in Shakspeare's? Mercy on us, there is another problem.]

Hazel smiled, well pleased, and leaned back, soothed, silenced, subdued, by her soft voice, and the exquisite touch of her velvet hand on his hot brow; for, woman-like, she laid her hand like down on that burning brow to aid her words in

soothing it. Nor did it occur to him just then that this admonition delivered with a kind maternal hand, maternal voice, came from the same young lady who had flown at him like a wild-cat with this very problem in her mouth. She mesmerized him, problem and all; he subsided into a complacent languor, and at last went to sleep, thinking only of her. But the topic had entered his mind too deeply to be finally dismissed. It returned next day, though in a different form. You must know that Hazel, as he lay on his back in the boat, had often in a half-drowsy way, watched the effect of the sun upon the boat's mast; it now stood, a bare pole, and at certain hours acted like the needle of a dial by casting a shadow on the sands. Above all, he could see pretty well by means of this pole and its shadow when the sun attained its greatest elevation. He now asked Miss Rolleston to assist him in making this observation exactly.

She obeyed his instructions, and the moment the shadow reached its highest angle, and showed the minutest symptom of declension, she said, "Now!" and Hazel called out in a loud voice:—

"Noon!"

"And forty-nine minutes past eight at Sydney," said Helen, holding out her chronometer; for she had been sharp enough to get it ready of her own accord.

Hazel looked at her and at the watch with amazement and incredulity.

"What?" said he. "Impossible. You can't have kept Sydney time all this while."

"And pray why not?" said Helen. "Have you forgotten that once somebody praised me for keeping Sydney time; it helped you, somehow or other, to know where we were."

"And so it will now," cried Hazel, exultingly.

"But no, it is impossible. We have gone through scenes that—you can't have wound that watch up without missing a day."

"Indeed but I have," said Helen. "Not wind my watch up! Why, if I was dying I should wind my watch up. See, it requires no key; a touch or two of the fingers, and it is done. Oh, I am remarkably constant in all my habits; and this is an old friend I never neglect. Do you remember that terrible night in the boat, when neither of us expected to see the morning,—oh, how good and brave you were!—well, I remember winding it up that night. I kissed it, and bade it good-bye; but I never dreamed of not winding it up because I was going to be killed. What! am I not to be praised again, as I was on board ship? Stingy! can't afford to praise one twice for the same thing."

"Praised!" cried Hazel, excitedly; "worshipped, you mean. Why, we have got the longitude by means of your chronometer. It is wonderful! It is providential! It is the finger of Heaven! Pen and ink, and let me work it out."

In his excitement he got up without assistance, and was soon busy calculating the longitude of Godsend Isle.

CHAPTER XL.

"THERE," said he. "Now the latitude I must guess at by certain combinations. In the first place the slight variation in the length of the

days. Then I must try and make a rough calculation of the sun's parallax. And then my botany will help me a little; spices furnish a clue; there are one or two that will not grow outside the tropic. It was the longitude that beat me, and now we have conquered it! Hurrah! Now I know what to diffuse, and in what direction; east-south-east; the ducks have shown me that much. So there's the first step towards the impossible problem."

"Very well," said Helen; "and I am sure one step is enough for one day. I forbid you the topic for twelve hours at least. I detest it because it always makes your poor head so hot."

"What on earth does that matter?" said Hazel, impetuously, and almost crossly.

"Come, come, come, sir," said Helen, authoritatively; "it matters to me."

But when she saw that he could think of nothing else, and that opposition irritated him, she had the tact and good sense not to strain her authority, nor to irritate her subject.

Hazel spliced a long, fine-pointed stick to the mast-head, and set a plank painted white with guano at right angles to the base of the mast; and so, whenever the sun attained his meridian altitude, went into a difficult and subtle calculation to arrive at the latitude, or as near it as he could without proper instruments; and he brooded and brooded over his discovery of the longitude, but unfortunately he could not advance. In some problems the first step once gained leads, or at least points, to the next: but to know whereabouts they were, and to let others know it, were two difficulties heterogeneous and distinct.

Having thought and thought till his head was dizzy, at last he took Helen's advice and put it by for a while. He set himself to fit and number a quantity of pearl-oyster shells, so that he might be able to place them at once, when he should be able to re-commence his labor of love in the cavern.

One day Helen had left him so employed, and was busy cooking the dinner at her own place, but, mind you, with one eye on the dinner and another on her patient, when suddenly she heard him shouting very loud, and ran out to see what was the matter.

He was roaring like mad, and whirling his arms over his head like a demented windmill.

She ran to him.

"Eureka! Eureka!" he shouted, in furious excitement.

"Oh dear!" cried Helen; "never mind." She was all against her patient exciting himself.

But he was exalted beyond even her control. "Crown me with laurel," he cried; "I have solved the problem;" and up went his arms.

"Oh, is that all?" said she calmly.

"Get me two squares of my parchment," cried he; "and some of the finest gut."

"Will not after dinner do?"

"No; certainly not," said Hazel, in a voice of command. "I wouldn't wait a moment for all the flesh-pots of Egypt."

Then she went like the wind and fetched them.

"Oh, thank you! thank you! Now I want,—let me see,—ah, there's an old rusty hoop that was washed ashore, on one of that ship's casks.

I put it carefully away; how the unlikely things come in useful soon or late!"

She went for the hoop, but not so rapidly, for here it was that the first faint doubt of his sanity came in. However, she brought it, and he thanked her.

"And now," said he, "while I prepare the intelligence, will you be so kind as to fetch me the rushes?"

"The what?" said Helen, in growing dismay.

"The rushes! I'll tell you where to find some."

Helen thought the best thing was to temporize. Perhaps he would be better after eating some wholesome food. "I'll fetch them directly after dinner," said she. "But it will be spoiled if I leave it for long; and I do so want it to be nice for you to-day."

"Dinner?" cried Hazel. "What do I care for dinner now? I am solving my problem. I'd rather go without dinner for years than interrupt a great idea. Pray let dinner take its chance, and obey me for once."

"For once!" said Helen, and turned her mild hazel eyes on him with such a look of gentle reproach.

"Forgive me! But don't take me for a child, asking you for a toy; I'm a poor crippled inventor, who sees daylight at last. Oh, I am on fire; and, if you want me not to go into a fever, why, get me my rushes."

"Where shall I find them?" said Helen, catching fire at him.

"Go to where your old hut stood, and follow the river about a furlong: you will find a bed of high rushes; cut me a good bundle, cut them below the water, choose the stoutest. Here is a pair of shears I found in the ship."

She took the shears and went swiftly across the sands and up the slope. He watched her with an admiring eye; and well he might, for it was the very poetry of motion. Hazel in his hours of health had almost given up walking; he ran from point to point, without fatigue or shortness of breath. Helen, equally pressed for time, did not run; but she went almost as fast. By rising with the dawn, by three meals a day of animal food, by constant work, and heavenly air, she was in a condition women rarely attain to. She was *trained*. Ten miles was no more to her than ten yards. And, when she was in a hurry, she got over the ground by a grand but feminine motion not easy to describe. It was a series of smooth undulations, not vulgar strides, but swift rushes, in which the loins seemed to propel the whole body, and the feet scarcely to touch the ground: it was the vigor and freedom of a savage, with the grace of a lady.

And so it was she swept across the sands and up the slope,

Et vera incessu patuit dea.

While she was gone, Hazel cut two little squares of seals' bladder, one larger than the other. On the smaller he wrote: "An English lady wrecked on an island. Longitude, ; S. latitude, between the and parallels. Haste to her rescue." Then he folded this small, and inclosed it in the larger slip, which he made into a little bag, and tied the neck extremely tight with fine gut, leaving a long piece of the gut free.

And now Helen came gliding back, as she went, and brought him a large bundle of rushes.

Then he asked her to help him fasten these rushes round the iron hoop.

"It must not be done too regularly," said he; "but so as to look as much like a little bed of rushes as possible."

Helen was puzzled still, but interested. So she set to work, and, between them, they fastened rushes all round the hoop, although it was a large one.

But when it was done, Hazel said they were too bare.

"Then we will fasten another row," said Helen, good-humoredly. And, without more ado, she was off to the river again.

When she came back, she found him up, and he said the great excitement had cured him,—such power has the brain over the body. This convinced her he had really hit upon some great idea. And, when she had made him eat his dinner by her fire, she asked him to tell her all about it.

But, by a natural reaction, the glorious and glowing excitement of mind that had battled his very rheumatic pains was now followed by doubt and dejection.

"Don't ask me yet," he sighed. "Theory is one thing; practice is another. We count without our antagonists. I forgot they will set their wits against mine: and they are many, I am but one. And I have been so often defeated. And, do you know, I have observed that whenever I say beforehand, Now I am going to do something clever, I am always defeated. Pride really goes before destruction, and vanity before a fall."

The female mind, rejecting all else, went like a needle's point at one thing in this explanation.

"Our antagonists?" said Helen, looking sadly puzzled. "Why, what antagonists have we?"

"The messengers," said Hazel, with a groan. "The aerial messengers."

That did the business. Helen dropped the subject with almost ludicrous haste, and, after a few commonplace observations, made a nice comfortable dose of grog and bark for him. This she administered as an independent transaction, and not at all by way of comment on his antagonists, the aerial messengers.

It operated unkindly for her purpose; it did him so much good, that he lifted up his dejected head, and his eyes sparkled again, and he set to work, and, by sunset, prepared two more bags of bladder with inscriptions inside, and long tails of fine gut hanging. He then set to work, and, with fingers far less adroit than hers, fastened another set of rushes round the hoop. He set them less evenly, and some of them not quite perpendicular; and, while he was fumbling over this, and examining the effect with paternal glances, Helen's hazel eye dwelt on him with furtive pity; for, to her, this girdle of rushes was now an instrument that bore an ugly likeness to the sceptre of straw with which vanity run to seed sways imaginary kingdoms in Bedlam or Bicêtre.

And yet he was better. He walked about the cavern and conversed charmingly; he was dictionary, essayist, *raconteur*, any thing she liked; and, as she prudently avoided and ignored the one fatal topic, it was a delightful evening: her

fingers were as busy as his tongue; and, when he retired, she presented him with the fruits of a fortnight's work, a glorious wrapper made of fleecy cotton inclosed in a plaited web of flexible and silky grasses. He thanked her, and blessed her, and retired for the night.

About midnight she awoke and felt uneasy; so she did what since his illness she had done a score of times without his knowledge—she stole from her lair to watch him.

She found him wrapped in her present, which gave her great pleasure; and sleeping like an infant, which gave her joy. She eyed him eloquently for a long time; and then very timidly put out her hand, and, in her quality of nurse, laid it lighter than down upon his brow.

The brow was cool, and a very slight moisture on it showed the fever was going or gone.

She folded her arms and stood looking at him: and she thought of all they two had done and suffered together. Her eyes absorbed him, devoured him. The time flew by unheeded. It was so sweet to be able to set her face free from its restraint, and let all its sunshine beam on him; and, even when she retired at last, those light hazel eyes, that could flash fire at times, but were all dove-like now, hung and lingered on him as if they could never look at him enough.

Half an hour before daybreak she was awakened by the dog howling piteously. She felt a little uneasy at that; not much. However, she got up, and issued from her cavern, just as the sun showed his red eye above the horizon. She went towards the boat as a matter of course. She found Ponto tied to the helm: the boat was empty, and Hazel nowhere to be seen.

She uttered a scream of dismay.

The dog howled and whined louder than ever.

CHAPTER XLI.

WARDLAW senior was not what you would call a tender-hearted man; but he was thoroughly moved by General Rolleston's distress, and by his fortitude. "The gallant old man! Landing in England one week and going back to the Pacific the next! Like goes with like; and Wardlaw senior, energetic and resolute himself, though he felt for his son, stricken down by grief, gave his heart to the more valiant distress of his contemporary. He manned and victualled the Springbok for a long voyage, ordered her to Plymouth, and took his friend down to her by train.

They went out to her in a boat. She was a screw steamer, that could sail nine knots an hour without burning a coal. As she came down the Channel, the General's trouble got to be well known on board her, and, when he came out of the harbor, the sailors by an honest, hearty impulse, that did them credit, waited for no orders, but manned the yards to receive him with the respect due to his services and his sacred calamity.

On getting on board, he saluted the captain and the ship's company with sad dignity, and retired to his cabin with Mr. Wardlaw. There the old merchant forced on him by loan seven hundred pounds, chiefly in gold and silver, tell-

ing him there was nothing like money, go where you will. He then gave him a number of notices he had printed, and a paper of advice and instructions; it was written in his own large, clear, formal hand.

General Rolleston tried to falter out his thanks. John Wardlaw interrupted him.

"Next to you I am her father; am I not?"

"You have proved it."

"Well, then. However, if you do find her, as I pray to God you may, I claim the second kiss, mind that; not for myself, though; for my poor Arthur, that lies on a sick-bed for her."

General Rolleston assented to that in a broken voice. He could hardly speak.

And so they parted; and that sad parent went out to the Pacific.

To him it was indeed a sad and gloomy voyage; and the hope with which he went on board oozed gradually away as the ship traversed the vast tracks of ocean. One immensity of water to be passed before that other immensity could be reached, on whose vast uniform surface the search was to be made.

To abridge this gloomy and monotonous part of our tale, suffice it to say that he endured two months of water and infinity ere the vessel, fast as she was, reached Valparaiso. Their progress, however, had been more than once interrupted to carry out Wardlaw's instructions. The poor General himself had but one idea; to go and search the Pacific with his own eyes; but Wardlaw, more experienced, directed him to overhaul every whaler and coasting-vessel he could, and deliver printed notices; telling the sad story, and offering a reward for any positive information, good or bad, that should be brought in to his agent at Valparaiso. Acting on these instructions they had overhauled two or three coasting-vessels, as they steamed up from the Horn. They now placarded the port of Valparaiso, and put the notices on board all vessels bound westward; and the captain of the Springbok spoke to the skippers in the port. But they all shook their heads, and could hardly be got to give their minds seriously to the inquiry, when they heard in what water the cutter was last seen and on what course.

One old skipper said, "Look on Juan Fernandez, and then at the bottom of the Pacific; but the sooner you look *there* the less time you will lose."

From Valparaiso they ran to Juan Fernandez, which indeed seemed the likeliest place if she was alive.

When the larger island of that group, the island dear alike to you who read, and to us who write, this tale, came in sight, the father's heart began to beat higher.

The ship anchored and took in coal, which was furnished at a wickedly high price by Mr. Joshua Fullalove, who had virtually purchased the island from Chili, having got it on lease for longer than the earth itself is to last, we hear.

And now Rolleston found the value of Wardlaw's loan; it enabled him to prosecute his search through the whole group of islands; and he did hear at last of three persons who had been wrecked on Masa Fuero; one of them a female. He followed this up, and at last discovered the parties. He found them to be Spaniards, and the woman smoking a pipe.

After this bitter disappointment he went back to the ship, and she was to weigh her anchor next morning.

But, while General Rolleston was at Masa Fuero, a small coasting-vessel had come in, and brought a strange report at second-hand that in some degree unsettled Captain Moreland's mind; and being hotly discussed on the fore-castle, set the ship's company in a ferment.

CHAPTER XLII.

HAZEL had risen an hour before dawn for reasons well known to himself. He put on his worst clothes, and a leathern belt, his little bags round his neck, and took his bundle of rushes in his hand. He also provided himself with some pieces of raw fish and fresh oyster; and, thus equipped, went up through Terrapin Wood, and got to the neighborhood of the lagoons before daybreak.

There was a heavy steam on the water, and nothing else to be seen. He put the hoop over his head, and walked into the water, not without an internal shudder, it looked so cold.

But instead of that, it was very warm, unaccountably warm. He walked in up to his middle, and tied his iron hoop to his belt, so as to prevent it sinking too deep. This done, he waited motionless, and seemed a little bed of rushes. The sun rose, and the steam gradually cleared away, and Hazel, peering through a hole or two he had made expressly in his bed of rushes, saw several ducks floating about, and one in particular, all purple, without a speck but his amber eye. He contrived to detach a piece of fish, that soon floated to the surface near him. But no duck moved towards it. He tried another, and another; then a mallard he had not observed swam up from behind him, and was soon busy pecking at it within a yard of him. His heart beat; he glided slowly and cautiously forward till the bird was close to the rushes.

Hazel stretched out his hand with the utmost care, caught hold of the bird's feet, and dragged him sharply under the water, and brought him up within the circle of the rushes. He quacked and struggled. Hazel soused him under directly, and so quenched the sound; then he glided slowly to the bank, so slowly that the rushes merely seemed to drift ashore. This he did not to create suspicion, and so spoil the next attempt. As he glided, he gave his duck air every now and then, and soon got on *terra firma*. By this time he had taught the duck not to quack, or he would get soused and held under. He now took the long gut-end and tied it tight round the bird's leg, and so fastened the bag to him. Even while he was effecting this, a posse of ducks rose at the west end of the marsh, and took their flight from the island. As they passed, Hazel threw his captive up in the air; and such was the force of example, aided, perhaps, by the fright the captive had received, that Hazel's bird instantly joined these travellers, rose with them into the high currents, and away, bearing the news eastward upon the wings of the wind. Then Hazel returned to the pool, and twice more he was so fortunate as to secure a bird, and launch him into space.

So hard is it to measure the wit of man, and to define his resources. The problem was solved; the aerial messengers were on the wing, diffusing over hundreds of leagues of water the intelligence that an English lady had been wrecked on an unknown island, in longitude 103 deg. 30 min., and between the 32d and 35th parallels of south latitude; and calling good men and ships to her rescue for the love of God.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AND now for the strange report that landed at Juan Fernandez while General Rolleston was searching Masa Fuero.

The coaster who brought it ashore had been in company, at Valparaiso, with a whaler from Nantucket, who told him he had fallen in with a Dutch whaler out at sea, and distressed for water: he had supplied the said Dutchman, who had thanked him, and given him a runlet of Hollands, and had told him in conversation that he had seen land and a river reflected on the sky, in waters where no land was marked in the chart; namely, somewhere between Juan Fernandez and Norfolk Island; and that, believing this to be the reflection of a part of some island near at hand, and his water being low, though not at that time run out, he had gone considerably out of his course in hopes of finding this watered island, but could see nothing of it. Nevertheless, as his grandfather, who had been sixty years at sea, and logged many wonderful things, had told him the sky had been known to reflect both ships and land at a great distance, he fully believed there was an island somewhere in that longitude, not down on any chart: an island wooded and watered.

This tale soon boarded the Springbok, and was hotly discussed on the fore-castle. It came to Captain Moreland's ears, and he examined the skipper of the coasting-smack. But this examination elicited nothing new, inasmuch as the skipper had the tale only at third hand. Captain Moreland, however, communicated it to General Rolleston on his arrival, and asked him whether he thought it worth while to deviate from their instructions upon information of such a character. Rolleston shook his head. "An island reflected in the sky!"

"No, sir: a portion of an island containing a river."

"It is clearly a fable," said Rolleston, with a sigh.

"What is a fable, General?"

"That the sky can reflect terrestrial objects."

"Oh, there I can't go with you. The phenomenon is rare, but it is well established. I never saw it myself, but I have come across those that have. Suppose we catechise the fore-castle. Hy! Fok'sel!"

"Sir!"

"Send a man aft: the oldest seaman aboard."

"Ay, ay, sir."

There was some little delay: and then a sailor or of about sixty slouched aft, made a sea scrape, and, removing his cap entirely, awaited the captain's commands.

"My man," said the captain, "I want you to answer a question. Do you believe land and

ships have ever been seen in the sky, reflected?"

"A many good seamen holds to that, sir," said the sailor, cautiously.

"Is it the general opinion of seamen before the mast? Come, tell us. Jack's as good as his master in these matters."

"Couldn't say for boys and lubbers, sir. But I never met a full-grown seaman as denied that there. Sartinly few has seen it: but all of 'em has seen them as has seen it; ships, and land, too; but mostly ships. Hows'ever, I had a mess-mate once as was sailing past a rock they call Ailsa Craig, and saw a regiment of soldiers marching in the sky. Logged it, did the mate; and them soldiers was a marching between two towns in Ireland at that very time."

"There, you see, General," said Captain Moreland.

"But this is all second-hand," said General Rolleston, with a sigh; "and I have learned how every thing gets distorted in passing from one to another."

"Ah," said the captain, "we can't help that; the thing is rare. I never saw it for one; and I suppose you never saw a phenomenon of the kind, Isaac?"

"Hain't I!" said Isaac, grimly. Then, with sudden and not very reasonable heat, "D—my eyes and limbs if I hain't seen the Peak o' Teneriffe in the sky topsy-turvy, and as plain as I see that there cloud there" (pointing upward).

"Come," said Moreland; "now we are getting to it. Tell us all about that."

"Well, sir," said the seaman, "I don't care to larn them as laughs at every thing they hain't seen in maybe a dozen voyages at most; but you know me, and I knows you; though you command the ship, and I work before the mast. Now I axes you, sir, should you say Isaac Aiken was the man to take a sugar-loaf, or a cocked hat, for the Peak o' Teneriffe?"

"As likely as I am myself, Isaac."

"No commander can say fairer nor that," said Isaac, with dignity. "Well, then, your honor, I'll tell ye the truth, and no lie: We was bound for Teneriffe with a fair wind, though not so much of it as we wanted, by reason she was a good sea-boat, but broad in the bows. The Peak hove in sight in the sky, and all the glasses was at her. She lay a point or two on our weather-quarter like, full two hours, and then she just melted away like a lump o' sugar. We kept on our course a day and a half, and at last we sighted the real Peak, and anchored off the port; whereby, when we saw Teneriffe Peak in the sky to winnard, she lay a hundred leagues to looard, s'help me God!"

"That is wonderful," said General Rolleston.

"That will do, Isaac," said the captain.

"Mr. Butt, double his grog for a week, for havin' seen more than I have."

The captain and General Rolleston had a long discussion; but the result was, they determined to go to Easter Island first, for General Rolleston was a soldier, and had learned to obey as well as command. He saw no sufficient ground for deviating from Wardlaw's positive instructions.

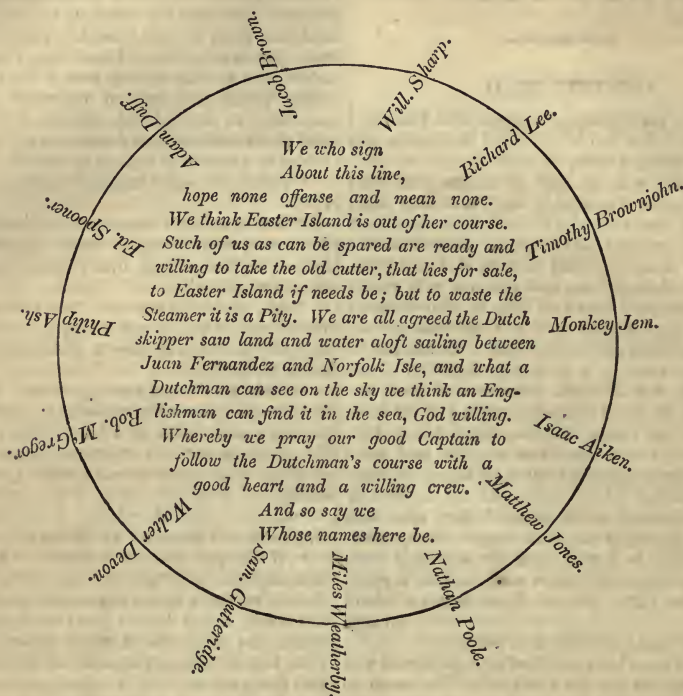
This decision soon became known throughout the ship; and she was to weigh anchor at 11 A.M. next day, by high water.

At eight next morning, Captain Moreland and General Rolleston being on deck, one of the ship's boys, a regular pet, with rosy cheeks and black eyes, comes up to the gentlemen, takes off his cap, and, panting audibly at his own audacity, shoves a paper into General Rolleston's hand, and scuds away for his life.

"This won't do," said the captain, sternly. The high-bred soldier handed the paper to him unopened.

The captain opened it, looked a little vexed, but more amused, and handed it back to the General.

It was a ROUND ROBIN.



Round Robins are not ingratiating as a rule. But this one came from some rough but honest fellows, who had already shown that kindness and tact may reside in a coarse envelope. The sailors of the Springbok, when they first boarded her in the Thames, looked on themselves as men bound on an empty cruise; and nothing but the pay, which was five shillings per month above the average, reconciled them to it; for a sailor does not like going to sea for nothing, any more than a true sportsman likes to ride to hounds that are hunting a red herring trailed.

But the sight of the General had touched them afar off. His gray hair and pale face, seen as he rowed out of Plymouth Harbor, had sent them to the yards by a gallant impulse; and all through the voyage the game had been to put on an air of alacrity and hope, whenever they passed the General or came under his eye.

If hypocrisy is always a crime, this was a very criminal ship; for the men, and even the boys, were hypocrites, who, feeling quite sure that the daughter was dead at sea months ago, did, nevertheless, make up their faces to encourage the father into thinking she was alive and he was going to find her. But people who pursue this game too long, and keep up the hopes of another, get infected at last themselves; and the crew of the

Springbok arrived at Valparaiso infected with a little hope. Then came the Dutchman's tale, and the discussion which ended adversely to their views; and this elicited the circular we have now the honor to lay before our readers.

General Rolleston and Captain Moreland returned to the cabin and discussed this document. They came on deck again, and the men were piped aft. General Rolleston touched his cap, and, with the Round Robin in his hand, addressed them thus:—

"My men, I thank you for taking my trouble to heart as you do. But it would be a bad return to send any of you to Easter Island in that cutter; for she is not sea-worthy: so the captain tells me. I will not consent to throw away your lives in trying to save a life that is dear to me; but, as to the Dutchman's story, about an unknown island, our captain seems to think that is possible; and you tell us you are of the same opinion. Well, then, I give up my own judgment, and yield to yours. Yes, we will go westward with a good heart (he sighed), and a willing crew."

The men cheered. The boatswain piped; the anchor was heaved, and the Springbok went out on a course that bade fair to carry her within a hundred miles of Godsend Island.

She ran fast. On the second day some ducks passed over her head, one of which was observed to have something attached to its leg.

She passed within sixty miles of Mount Look-out; but never saw Godsend Island; and so pursued her way to the Society Islands; sent out her boats; made every inquiry around about the islands, but with no success; and, at last, after losing a couple of months there, brought the heart-sick father back, on much the same course, but rather more northerly.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HAZEL, returned homeward in a glow of triumph, and for once felt disposed to brag to Helen of his victory,—a victory by which she was to profit; not he.

They met in the wood; for she had tracked him by his footsteps. She seemed pale and disturbed, and speedily interrupted his exclamations of triumph by one of delight, which was soon, however, followed by one of distress.

"Oh, look at you!" she said. "You have been in the water: it is wicked; wicked."

"But I have solved the problem. I caught three ducks one after the other, and tied the intelligence to their legs: they are at this moment careering over the ocean, with our story and our longitude, and a guess at our latitude. Crown me with bays."

"With foolscap, more likely," said Helen: "only just getting well of rheumatic fever, and to go and stand in water up to the middle."

"Why, you don't listen to me!" cried Hazel, in amazement. "I tell you I have solved the problem."

"It is you that don't listen to common sense," retorted Helen. "If you go and make yourself ill, all the problems in the world will not compensate me. And I must say I think it was not very kind of you to run off so without warning: why give me hours of anxiety for want of a word? But there, it is useless to argue with a boy: yes, sir, a boy. The fact is, I have been too easy with you of late. One indulges sick children. But then they must not slip away and stand in the water, or there is an end of indulgence; and one is driven to severity. You must be ruled with a rod of iron. Go home this moment, sir, and change your clothes; and don't you presume to come into the presence of the nurse you have offended, till there's not a wet thread about you."

And so she ordered him off. The inventor in his moment of victory slunk away crestfallen to change his clothes.

So far Helen Rolleston was a type of her sex in its treatment of inventors. At breakfast she became a brilliant exception. The moment she saw Hazel seated by her fire in dry clothes she changed her key, and made him relate the whole business, and expressed the warmest admiration and sympathy.

"But," said she, "I do ask you not to repeat this exploit too often; now don't do it again for a fortnight. The island will not run away. Ducks come and go every day, and your health is very, very precious."

He colored with pleasure, and made the promise at once. But during this fortnight events oc-

curred. In the first place, he improved his invention. He remembered how a duck, overweighted by a crab, which was fast to her leg, had come on board the boat. Memory dwelling on this, and invention digesting it, he resolved to weight his next batch of ducks; for he argued thus: "Probably our ducks go straight from this to the great American Continent. Then it may be long ere one of them falls into the hands of a man; and perhaps that man will not know English. But, if I could impede the flight of my ducks, they might alight on ships: and three ships out of four know English."

Accordingly, he now inserted stones of various sizes into the little bags. It was a matter of nice calculation: the problem was to weight the birds just so much that they might be able to fly three or four hundred miles, or about half as far as their unnumbered companions.

But in the midst of all this a circumstance occurred that would have made a vain man, or indeed most men, fling the whole thing away. Helen and he came to a rupture. It began by her fault, and continued by his. She did not choose to know her own mind, and, in spite of secret warnings from her better judgment, she was driven by curiosity, or by the unhappy restlessness to which her sex are peculiarly subject at odd times, to sound Hazel as to the meaning of a certain epigram that rankled in her. And she did it in the most feminine way, that is to say, in the least direct: whereas the safest way would have been to grasp the nettle, if she could not let it alone.

Said she one day, quietly, though with a deep blush: "Do you know Mr. Arthur Wardlaw?"

Hazel gave a shiver, and said, "I do."

"Do you know any thing about him?"

"I do."

"Nothing to his discredit, I am sure."

"If you are sure, why ask me? Do I ever mention his name?"

"Perhaps you do, sometimes, without intending it."

"You are mistaken: he is in your thoughts, no doubt; but not in mine."

"Ought I to forget people entirely, and what I owe them?"

"That is a question I decline to go into."

"How harshly you speak to me. Is that fair? You know my engagement, and that honor and duty draw me to England; yet I am happy here. You, who are so good and strong, might pity me at least; for I am torn this way and that:" and here the voice ceased, and the tears began to flow.

"I do pity you," said Hazel; "I must pity any one who is obliged to mention honor and duty in the same breath as Arthur Wardlaw."

At this time Helen drew back, offended bitterly. "That pity I reject and scorn," said she. "No, I plighted my faith with my eyes open, and to a worthy object. I never knew him blacken any person who was not there to speak for himself, and that is a very worthy trait, in my opinion. The absent are like children; they are helpless to defend themselves."

Hazel racked with jealousy, and irritated at this galling comparison, lost his temper for once, and said those who lay traps must not complain if others fall into them.

"Traps! Who lay them?"

"You did, Miss Rolleston. Did I ever condescend to mention that man's name since we have been on the island? It is you make me talk of him."

"Condescend?"

"That is the word. Nor will I ever deign to mention him again. If my love had touched your heart, I should have been obliged to mention him, for then I should have been bound to tell you a story in which he is mixed—my own miserable story,—my blood boils against the human race when I think of it. But no, I see I am nothing to you; and I will be silent."

"It is very cruel of you to say that," replied Helen, with tears in her eyes; "tell me your story, and you will see whether you are nothing to me."

"Not one word of it," said Hazel, slowly, "until you have forgotten that man exists."

"Oh! thank you, sir, this is plain speaking. I am to forget honor and plighted faith; and then you will trust me with your secrets, when I have shown myself unworthy to be trusted with any thing. Keep your secrets, and I'll try and keep faith; ay, and I shall keep it, too, as long as there's life in my body."

"Can't you keep faith without torturing me, who love you?"

Helen's bosom began to heave at this, but she fought bravely. "Love me less, and respect me more," said she, panting; "you affront me, you frighten me. I looked on you as a brother, a dear brother. But now I am afraid of you—I am afraid—"

He was so injudicious as to interrupt her, instead of giving her time to contradict herself. "You have nothing to fear," said he; "keep this side of the island, and I'll live on the other, rather than hear the name of Arthur Wardlaw."

Helen's courage failed her at that spirited proposal, and she made no reply at all, but turned her back haughtily, and went away from him, only, when she had got a little way, her proud head drooped, and she went crying.

A coolness sprang up between them, and neither of them knew how to end it. Hazel saw no way to serve her now, except by flying weighted ducks, and he gave his mind so to this that one day he told her he had twenty-seven ducks in the air all charged, and two-thirds of them weighted. He thought that must please her now. To his surprise and annoyance, she received the intelligence coldly, and asked him whether it was not cruel to the birds.

Hazel colored with mortification at his great act of self-denial being so received.

He said, "I don't think my worst enemy can say I am wantonly cruel to God's creatures."

Helen threw in, deftly, "And I am not your worst enemy."

"But what other way is there to liberate you from this island, where you have nobody to speak to but me? Well, selfishness is the best course. Think only of others, and you are sure not to please them."

"If you want to please people, you must begin by understanding them," said the lady, not ill-naturedly.

"But if they don't understand themselves?"

"Then pity them; you can, for you are a man."

"What hurts me," said Hazel, "is that you

really seem to think I fly these ducks for my pleasure. Why, if I had my wish, you and I should never leave this island, nor any other person set a foot on it. I am frank, you see."

"Rather too frank."

"What does it matter, since I do my duty all the same, and fly the ducks? But sometimes I do yearn for a word of praise for it; and that word never comes."

"It is a praiseworthy act," said Helen, but so icily that it is a wonder he ever flew another duck after that.

"No matter," said he, and his hand involuntarily sought his heart; "you read me a sharp but wholesome lesson, that we should do our duty for our duty's sake. And as I am quite sure it is my duty to liberate you and restore you to those you—I'll fly three ducks to-morrow morning instead of two."

"It is not done by my advice," said Helen.

"You will certainly make yourself ill."

"Oh, that is all nonsense!" said Hazel.

"You are rude to me," said Helen, "and I am not aware that I deserve it."

"Rude, am I? Then I'll say no more," said Hazel, half humbly, half doggedly.

His parchement was exhausted, and he was driven to another expedient. He obtained alcohol by distillation from rum, and having found dragon's blood in its pure state, little ruby drops, made a deep red varnish that defied water; he got slips of bark, white inside, cut his inscription deep on the inner side, and filled the incised letters with this red varnish. He had forty-eight ducks in the air, and was rising before daybreak to catch another couple, when he was seized with a pain in the right hip and knee, and found he could hardly walk, so he gave in that morning, and kept about the premises. But he got worse, and had hardly any use of his right side, from the waist downward, and was in great pain.

As the day wore on, the pain and loss of power increased, and resisted all his remedies; there was no fever to speak of; but Nature was grimly revenging herself for many a gentler warning neglected. When he realized his condition, he was terribly cut up, and sat on the sand with his head in his hands for nearly two hours. But, after that period of despondency, he got up, took his boat-hook, and, using it as a staff, hobbled to his arsenal, and set to work.

Among his materials was a young tree he had pulled up; the roots ran at right angles to the stem. He just sawed off the ends of the roots, and then proceeded to shorten the stem.

But meantime Helen, who had always a secret eye on him and his movements, had seen there was something wrong, and came timidly and asked what was the matter.

"Nothing," said he, doggedly.

"Then why did you sit so long on the sand? I never saw you like that."

"I was ruminating."

"What upon? Not that I have any right to ask."

"On the arrogance and folly of men; they attempt more than they can do, and despise the petty prudence and common sense of women, and smart for it; as I am smarting now for being wiser than you."

"Oh," said Helen; "why, what is the mat-

ter? and what is that you have made? It looks like—oh dear!"

"It is a crutch," said Hazel, with forced calmness; "and I am a cripple."

Helen clasped her hands, and stood trembling.

Hazel lost his self-control for a moment, and cried out in a voice of agony, "A useless cripple. I wish I was dead and out of the way."

Then ashamed of having given way before her, he seized his crutch, placed the crook under his arm, and turned sullenly away from her.

Four steps he took with his crutch.

She caught him with two movements of her supple and vigorous frame.

She just laid her left hand gently on his shoulder, and with her right she stole the crutch softly away, and let it fall upon the sand. She took his right hand, and put it to her lips like a subject paying homage to her sovereign; and then she put her strong arm under his shoulder, still holding his right hand in hers, and looked in his face. "No wooden crutches when I am by," said she, in a low voice, full of devotion.

He stood surprised, and his eyes began to fill.

"Come," said she, in a voice of music. And, thus aided, he went with her to her cavern. As they went, she asked him tenderly where the pain was.

"It was in my hip and knee," he said: "but now it is nowhere; for joy has come back to my heart."

"And to mine too," said Helen; "except for this."

The quarrel dispersed like a cloud, under this calamity. There was no formal reconciliation; no discussion: and this was the wisest course: for the unhappy situation remained unchanged; and the friendliest discussion could only fan the embers of discord and misery gently, instead of fiercely.

The pair so strangely thrown together commenced a new chapter of their existence. It was not patient and nurse over again; Hazel, though very lame, had too much spirit left to accept that position. But still the sexes became in a measure reversed,—Helen the fisherman and forager, Hazel the cook and domestic.

He was busy as ever, but in a narrow circle; he found pearl oysters near the sunk galleon, and, ere he had been lame many weeks, he had entirely lined the sides of the cavern with mother-of-pearl set in cement, and close as mosaic.

Every day he passed an hour in Paradise; for his living crutch made him take a little walk with her; her hand held his; her arm supported his shoulder; her sweet face was near his, full of tender solicitude; they seemed to be one; and spoke in whispers to each other, like thinking aloud. The causes of happiness were ever present; the causes of unhappiness were out of sight, and showed no signs of approach.

And, of the two, Helen was the happiest. Before a creature so pure as this marries and has children, the great maternal instinct is still there, but feeds on what it can get,—first a doll, and then some helpless creature or other. Too often she wastes her heart's milk on something grown up, but as selfish as a child. Helen was more fortunate; her child was her hero, now so lame that he must lean on her to walk. The days

passed by, and the island was fast becoming the world to those two, and as bright a world as ever shone on two mortal creatures.

It was a happy dream.

What a pity that dreams dissolve so soon!

This had lasted for nearly two months, and Hazel was getting better, though still not well enough, or not fool enough to dismiss his live crutch, when one afternoon Helen, who had been up on the heights, observed a dark cloud in the blue sky towards the west. There was not another cloud visible, and the air marvellously clear; time, about three quarters of an hour before sunset. She told Hazel about this solitary cloud and asked him, with some anxiety, if it portended another storm. He told her to be under no alarm—there were no tempests in that latitude except at the coming in and going out of the rains—but he should like to go round the Point and look at her cloud.

She lent him her arm, and they went round the Point; and there they saw a cloud entirely different from any thing they had ever seen since they were on the island. It was like an enormous dark ribbon stretched along the sky, at some little height above the horizon. Notwithstanding its prodigious length it got larger before their very eyes.

Hazel started.

Helen felt him start, and asked him, with some surprise, what was the matter.

"Cloud!" said he; "that is no cloud. That is smoke."

"Smoke!" echoed Helen, becoming agitated in her turn.

"Yes; the breeze is northerly, and carries the smoke nearer to us; it is the smoke of a steam-boat."

CHAPTER XLV.

Born were greatly moved; and after one swift glance Helen stole at him, neither looked at the other. They spoke in hurried whispers.

"Can they see the island?"

"I don't know; it depends on how far the boat is to windward of her smoke."

"How shall we know?"

"If she sees the island, she will make for it that moment."

"Why? do ships never pass an unknown island?"

"Yes. But that steamer will not pass us."

"But why?"

At this question Hazel hung his head, and his lip quivered. He answered her at last. "Because she is looking for you."

Helen was struck dumb at this.

He gave his reasons. "Steamers never visit these waters. Love has brought that steamer out; love that will not go unrewarded. Arthur Wardlaw is on board that ship."

"Have they seen us yet?"

Hazel forced on a kind of dogged fortitude. He said, "When the smoke ceases to elongate, you will know they have changed their course, and they will change their course the moment the man at the mast-head sees us."

"Oh! But how do you know they have a man at the mast-head?"

"I know by myself. I should have a man at the mast-head night and day."

And now the situation was beyond words. They both watched and watched, to see the line of smoke cease.

It continued to increase and spread eastward; and that proved the steamer was continuing her course.

The sun drew close to the horizon.

"They don't see us," said Helen faintly.

"No," said Hazel; "not yet."

"And the sun is just setting. It is all over."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes a moment, and then, after a sob or two, she said almost cheerfully, "Well, dear friend, we were happy till that smoke came to disturb us: let us try and be as happy now it is gone. Don't smile like that, it makes me shudder."

"Did I smile? It must have been at your simplicity in thinking we have seen the last of that steamer."

"And so we have."

"Not so. In three hours she will be at anchor in that bay."

"Why, what will bring her?"

"I shall bring her."

"You? How?"

"By lighting my bonfire."

CHAPTER XLVI.

HELEN had forgotten all about the bonfire. She now asked whether he was sure those on board the steamer could see the bonfire. Then Hazel told her that it was now of prodigious size and height. Some six months before he was crippled he had added and added to it.

"That bonfire," said he, "will throw a ruddy glare over the heavens, that they can't help seeing on board the steamer. Then, as they are not on a course, but on a search, they will certainly run a few miles southward to see what it is. They will say it is either a beacon or a ship on fire; and, in either case, they will turn the boat's head this way. Well, before they have run southward half a dozen miles, their lookout will see the bonfire, and the island in its light. Let us get to the boat, my lucifers are there."

She lent him her arm to the boat, and stood by while he made his preparations. They were very simple. He took a pine torch and smeared it all over with pitch; then put his lucifer-box in his bosom and took his crutch. His face was drawn pitifully, but his closed lips betrayed unshaken and unshakable resolution. He shouldered his crutch and hobbled up as far as the cavern. Here Helen interposed.

"Don't you go toiling up the hill," said she. "Give me the lucifers and the torch, and let me light the beacon. I shall be there in half the time you will."

"Thank you! thank you!" said Hazel, eagerly, not to say violently.

He wanted it done; but it killed him to do it. He then gave her his instructions.

"It is as big as a haystack," said he, "and as dry as a chip; and there are eight bundles of straw placed expressly. Light the bundles to windward first, then the others; it will soon be all in a blaze."

"Meanwhile," said Helen, "you prepare our supper. I feel quite faint—for want of it."

Hazel assented.

"It is the last we shall—" he was going to say it was the last they would eat together; but his voice failed him, and he hobbled into the cavern, and tried to smother his emotion in work. He lighted the fire, and blew it into a flame with a palmetto leaf, and then he sat down awhile, very sick at heart; then he got up and did the cooking, sighing all the time; and, just when he was beginning to wonder why Helen was so long lighting eight bundles of straw, she came in, looking pale.

"Is it all right?" said he.

"Go and look," said she. "No, let us have our supper first."

Neither had any appetite: they sat and kept casting strange looks at one another.

To divert this anyhow, Hazel looked up at the roof, and said faintly, "If I had known, I would have made more haste and set *pearl* there as well."

"What does that matter?" said Helen, looking down.

"Not much, indeed," replied he, sadly. "I am a fool to utter such childish regrets; and, more than that, I am a mean selfish cur to *have* a regret. Come, come, we can't eat; let us go round the Point and see the waves reddened by the beacon that gives you back to the world you were born to embellish."

Helen said she would go directly. And her languid reply contrasted strangely with his excitement. She played with her supper, and wasted time in a very unusual way, until he told her plump she was not really eating, and he could wait no longer, he must go and see how the beacon was burning.

"Oh, very well," said she; and they went down to the beach.

She took his crutch and gave it to him. This little thing cut him to the heart. It was the first time she had accompanied him so far as that without offering herself to be his crutch. He sighed deeply, as he put the crutch under his arm; but he was too proud to complain, only he laid it all on the approaching steamboat.

The subtle creature by his side heard the sigh, and smiled sadly at being misunderstood,—but what man could understand her? They hardly spoke till they reached the Point. The waves glittered in the moonlight; there was no red light on the water.

"Why, what is this?" said Hazel. "You can't have lighted the bonfire in eight places, as I told you."

She folded her arms and stood before him in an attitude of defiance; all but her melting eye.

"I have not lighted it at all," said she.

Hazel stood aghast. "What have I done?" he cried. "Duty, manhood, every thing demanded that I should light that beacon, and I trusted it to you."

Helen's attitude of defiance melted away: she began to cower, and hid her blushing face in her hands. Then she looked up imploringly. Then she uttered a wild and eloquent cry, and fled from him like the wind.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THAT cloud was really the smoke of the Springbok, which had mounted into air so thin that it could rise no higher. The boat herself was many miles to the northward, returning full of heavy hearts from a fruitless search. She came back in a higher parallel of latitude, intending afterwards to steer N.W. to Easter Island. Then the life was gone out of the ship; the father was deeply dejected, and the crew could no longer feign the hope they did not feel. Having pursued the above course to within four hundred miles of Juan Fernandez, General Rolleston begged the captain to make a bold deviation to the S.W., and then see if they could find nothing there before going to Easter Island.

Captain Moreland was very unwilling to go to the S.W., the more so as coal was getting short. However, he had not the heart to refuse General Rolleston any thing. There was a northerly breeze. He had the fires put out, and, covering the ship with canvas, sailed three hundred miles S.W. But found nothing. Then he took in sail, got up steam again, and away for Easter Island. The ship ran so fast that she had got into latitude thirty-two by ten A.M. next morning.

At 10h. 15m. the dreary monotony of this cruise was broken by the man at the mast-head.

"On deck there!"

"Hullo!"

"The schooner on our weather-bow!"

"Well, what of her?"

"She has luffed."

"Well, what o' that?"

"She has altered her course."

"How many points?"

"She was sailing S.E., and now her head is N.E."

"That is curious."

General Rolleston, who had come and listened with a grain of hope, now sighed and turned away.

The captain explained kindly that the man was quite right to draw his captain's attention to the fact of a trading-vessel altering her course.

"There is a sea-grammar, General," said he; "and, when one seaman sees another violate it, he concludes there is some reason or other. Now, Jack, what d'ye make of her?"

"I can't make much of her; she don't seem to know her own mind, that is all. At ten o'clock she was bound for Valparaiso or the Island. But now she has come about and beating to windward."

"Bound for Easter Island?"

"I dunno."

"Keep your eye on her."

"Ay, ay, sir."

Captain Moreland told General Rolleston that very few ships went to Easter Island, which lies in a lovely climate, but is a miserable place; and he was telling the General that it is inhabited by savages of a low order, who half worship the relics of masonry left by their more civilized predecessors, when Jack hailed the deck again.

"Well," said the captain.

"I think she is bound for the Springbok."

The soldier received this conjecture with astonishment and incredulity not to be wondered at. The steam-boat headed N.W., right in the

wind's eye. Sixteen miles off, at least, a ship was sailing N.E. So that the two courses might be represented thus:—



And there hung in the air, like a black mark against the blue sky, a fellow, whose oracular voice came down and said B was endeavoring to intercept A.

Nevertheless, time confirmed the conjecture; the schooner, having made a short board to the N.E., came about, and made a long board due west, which was as near as she could lie to the wind. On this Captain Moreland laid the steam-boat's head due north. This brought the vessels rapidly together.

When they were about two miles distant, the stranger slackened sail and hove to, hoisting stars and stripes at her mizzen. The union-jack went up the shrouds of the Springbok directly, and she pursued her course, but gradually slackened her steam.

General Rolleston walked the deck in great agitation, and now indulged in wild hopes, which Captain Moreland thought it best to discourage at once.

"Ah, sir," he said; "don't you run into the other extreme, and imagine he has come on our business. It is at sea as it is ashore: if a man goes out of his course to speak to you, it is for his own sake, not yours. This Yankee has got men sick with scurvy, and is come for lime-juice. Or his water is out. Or—hallo, savages aboard."

It was too true. The schooner had a cargo of savages, male and female; the males were nearly naked, but the females, strange to say, were dressed to the throat in ample robes, with broad and flowing skirts, and had little coronets on their heads. As soon as the schooner hove to, the fiddle had struck up, and the savages were now dancing in parties of four; the men doing a sort of monkey hornpipe in quick pace, with their hands nearly touching the ground; the women, on the contrary, erect and queenly, swept about in slow rhythm, with most graceful and coquettish movements of the arms and hands, and bewitching smiles.

The steam-boat came alongside, but at a certain distance, to avoid all chance of collision; and the crew clustered at the side and cheered the savages dancing. The poor General was forgotten at the merry sight.

Presently a negro in white cotton, with a face blacker than the savages, stepped forward and hoisted a board, on which was printed very large, ARE YOU

Having allowed this a moment to sink into the mind, he reversed the board, and showed these words, also printed large, THE SPRINGBOK?

There was a thrilling murmur on board; and, after a pause of surprise, the question was answered by a loud cheer and waving of hats.

The reply was perfectly understood; almost immediately a boat was lowered by some novel machinery, and pulled towards the steamer. There were two men in it: the skipper and the negro. The skipper came up the side of the Springbok.

He was loosely dressed in some light drab-colored stuff and a huge straw hat; a man with a long Puritanical head, a nose inclined to be aquiline, a face bronzed by weather and heat, thin resolute lips, and a square chin. But for a certain breadth between his keen gray eyes, which revealed more intellect than Cromwell's Ironsides were encumbered with, he might have passed for one of that hard-praying, harder-hitting fraternity.

He came on deck, just touched his hat, as if to brush away a fly, and, removing an enormous cigar from his mouth, said, "Wal, and so this is the Springbok. Spry little boat she is; how many knots can ye get out of her now? Not that I am curious."

"About twelve knots."

"And when the steam's off the bile, how many can ye sail? Not that it is my business."

"Eight or nine. What is your business?"

"Hum! You have been over some water looking for that gal. Where do ye hail from last?"

"The Society Islands. Did you board me to hear me my catechism?"

"No, I am not one of your prying sort. Where are ye bound for now?"

"I am bound for Easter Island."

"Have you heard any thing of the gal?"

"No."

"And when do ye expect to go back to England as wise as ye came?"

"Never while the ship can swim," cried Moreland, angrily, to hide his despondency from this stranger. "And now it is my turn, I think. What schooner is this? by whom commanded, and whither bound?"

"The Julia Dodd; Joshua Fullalove: bound for Juan Fernandez with the raw material of civilization—look at the varmint skippin'—and a printing-press; an' that's the instrument of civilization, I rather think."

"Well, sir; and why in Heaven's name did you change your course?"

"Wal, I reckon I changed it—to tell you a lie."

"To tell us a lie?"

"Ay; the darnedest eternal lie that ever came out of a man's mouth. Fust, there's an unknown island somewheres about. That's a kinder flourish beforehand. On that island there's an English gal wrecked."

Exclamations burst forth on every side at this.

"And she is so tarnation 'cute, she is flying ducks all over creation with a writing tied to their legs, telling the tale, and setting down the longitude. There, if that isn't a buster, I hope I may never live to tell another."

"God bless you, sir," cried the General.

"Where is the island?"

"What island?"

"The island where my child is wrecked."

"What, are you the gal's father?" said Joshua, with a sudden touch of feeling.

"I am, sir. Pray withhold nothing from me you know."

"Why, Cunnle," said the Yankee, soothingly; "don't I tell you it's a buster? However, the lie is none o' mine. It's that old cuss Skinflint set it afloat; he is always pisoning these peaceful waters."

Rolleston asked eagerly who Skinflint was, and where he could be found.

"Wal, he is a sorter sea Jack-of-all-trades,

eternally cruising about to buy gratis—those he buys of call it stealing. Got a rotten old cutter, manned by his wife and family. They get coal out of me for fur, and sell the coal at double my price; they kill seals and dress the skins aboard; kill fish and salt 'em aboard. Ye know when that fam'ly is at sea by the smell that pervades the briny deep an' heralds their approach. Yesterday the air smelt awful: so I said to Vespasian here, 'I think that sea-skunk is out, for there's something a pisoning the cerulean waves an' succumbambient air.' We hadn't sailed not fifty miles more before we run agin him. *Their clothes were drying all about the rigging.* Hails me, the varmint does. Vesp and I, we work the printing-press together, an' so order him to loo-ward, not to taint our Otaheiteans, that stink of ile at home, but I had 'em biled before I'd buy 'em, an' now they're vilets. 'Wal now, Skinflint,' says I; 'I reckon you're come to bring me that harpoon o' mine you stole last time you was at my island?' 'I never saw your harpoon,' says he, 'I want to know have you come across the Springbok?' 'Mebbe I have,' says I; 'why do you ask?' 'Got news for her,' says he; 'and can't find her nowhere.' So then we set to and fenced a bit; and this old varmint, to put me off the truth, told me the buster. A month ago or more he was boarded—by a duck. And this yar duck had a writing tied to his leg, and this yar writing said an English gal was wrecked on an island, and put down the very longitude. 'Show me that duck,' says I, ironical. 'D'ye take us for fools?' says he; 'we ate the duck for supper.' 'That was like ye,' says I; 'if an angel brought your pardon down from heights celestial, you'd roast him, and sell his feathers far swan's-down; mebbe ye ate the writing? I know y'are a hungry lot.' 'The writing is in my cabin,' says he. 'Show it me,' says I, 'an' mebbe I'll believe ye.' No, the cuss would only show it to the Springbok; 'There's a reward,' says he. 'What's the price of a soul aboard your cutter?' I asked him. 'Have you parted with yours, as you want to buy one?' says he. 'Not one as would carry me right slick away to everlasting blazes,' says I. So then we said good-morning, and he bore away for Valparaiso. Presently I saw your smoke, and that you would never overhaul old Stinkamalee on that track; so I came about. Now I tell ye that old cuss knows where the gal is, and mebbe got her tied band and fut in his cabin. An' I'm kinder sot on English gals; they put me in mind of butter and honey. Why, my schooner is named after one. So now, Cunnle, clap on steam for Valparaiso, and you'll soon overhaul the old stink-pot; you may know him by the brown patch in his jib-sail, the ontidy varmint. Pull out your purse and bind him to drop lying about ducks and geese, and tell you the truth; he knows where your gal is, I swan. Wal, ye needn't smother me." For by this time he was the centre of a throng, all pushing and driving to catch his words.

Captain Moreland begged him to step down into his cabin, and there the General thanked him with great warmth and agitation for his humanity. "We will follow your advice at once," he said. "Is there any thing I can offer you, without offense?"

"Wal," drawled the Yankee, 'I guess not.

Business an' sentiment won't mix nohow. Business took me to the island, sentiment brought me here. I'll take a shake-hand all round : and if y'have got live fowls to spare, I'll be obliged to you for a couple. Ye see I'm colonizing that darned island : an' sowing in with grain an' Otaheitan, an' niggers, an' Irishmen, an' all the cream o' creation ; an' I'd be glad of a couple o' Dorkins to crow the lazy varmint up."

This very moderate request was heartily complied with, and the acclamation and cheers of the crew followed this strange character to his schooner, at which his eye glistened and twinkled with quiet satisfaction, but he made it a point of honor not to move a muscle.

Before he could get under way, the Spring-bok took a circuit, and, passing within a hundred yards of him, fired a gun to leeward by way of compliment, set a cloud of canvas, and tore through the water at her highest speed. Outside the port of Valparaiso she fell in with Skinflint, and found him not quite so black as he was painted. The old fellow showed some parental feeling, produced the bag at once to General Rolleston, and assured him a wearied duck had come on board, and his wife had detached the writing.

They took in coal : and then ran westward once more, every heart beating high with confident hope.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

HELEN's act was strange, and demands a word of explanation. If she had thought the steam-boat was a strange vessel, she would have lighted the bonfire : if she had known her father was on board, she would have lighted it with joy. But Hazel, whose every word now was gospel, had said it was Arthur Wardlaw in that boat, searching for her.

Still, so strong is the impulse in all civilized beings to get back to civilization, that she went up that hill as honestly intending to light the bonfire as Hazel intended it to be lighted. But, as she went, her courage cooled, and her feet began to go slowly, as her mind ran swiftly forward to consequence upon consequence. To light that bonfire was to bring Arthur Wardlaw down upon herself and Hazel living alone and on intimate terms. Arthur would come and claim her to his face. Could she disallow his claim ? Gratitude would now be on his side as well as good faith. What a shock to Arthur ! What torture for Hazel ! torture that he foresaw, or why the face of anguish, that dragged even now at her heart-strings ? And then it could end only in one way ; she and Hazel would leave the island in Arthur's ship. What a voyage for all three ! She stood transfixed by shame ; her whole body blushed at what she saw coming. Then once more Hazel's face rose before her ; poor crippled Hazel ! her hero and her patient. She sat down and sighed, and could no more light the fire than she could have put it out if another had lighted it.

She was a girl that could show you at times she had a father as well as a mother : but that evening she was all woman.

They met no more that night.

In the morning his face was haggard, and showed a mental struggle ; but hers placid and

quietly beaming, for the very reason that she had made a great sacrifice. She was one of that sort.

And this difference between them was a fore-taste.

His tender conscience pricked him sore. To see her sit beaming there, when, if he had done his own duty with his own hands she would be on her way to England ! Yet his remorse was dumb ; for, if he gave it vent, then he must seem ungrateful to *her* for her sacrifice.

She saw his deep and silent compunction, approved it secretly ; said nothing, but smiled, and beamed, and soothed. He could not resist this : and wild thrills of joy and hope passed through him, visions of unbroken bliss far from the world.

But this sweet delirium was followed by misgivings of another kind. And here she was at fault. What could they be ?

It was the voice of conscience telling him that he was really winning her love, once inaccessible ; and, if so, was bound to tell her his whole story, and let her judge between him and the world, before she made any more sacrifices for him. But it is hard to stop great happiness : harder to stop it and ruin it. Every night, as he lay alone, he said, "To-morrow I will tell her all, and make her the judge." But in the morning her bright face crushed his purpose by the fear of clouding it. His limbs got strong and his heart got weak : and they used to take walks, and her head came near his shoulder : and the path of duty began to be set thicker than ever with thorns ; and the path of love with primroses. One day she made him sit to her for his portrait ; and, under cover of artistic enthusiasm, told him his beard was godlike, and nothing in the world could equal it for beauty. She never saw but one at all like it, poor Mr. Seaton's ; but even that was very inferior to his : and then she dismissed the sitter : "Poor thing," said she, "you are pale and tired." And she began to use ornaments : took her bracelets out of her bag, and picked pearls out of her walls, and made a coronet, under which her eyes flashed at night with superlative beauty,—conscious beauty brightened by the sense of being admired and looked at by the eye she desired to please.

She revered him. He had improved her character, and she knew it, and often told him so. "Call me Hazelia," she said ; "make me liker you, still."

One day, he came suddenly through the jungle, and found her reading her prayer-book.

He took it from her, not meaning to be rude, neither, but inquisitive.

It was open at the marriage-service, and her cheeks were dyed scarlet.

His heart panted. He was a clergyman ; he could read that service over them both.

Would it be a marriage ?

Not in England : but in some countries it would. Why not in this ? This was not England.

He looked up. Her head was averted ; she was downright distressed.

He was sorry to have made her blush : so he took her hand and kissed it tenderly, so tenderly that his heart seemed to go into his lips. She thrilled under it, and her white brow sank upon his shoulder.

The sky was a vault of purple with a flaming

topaz in the centre; the sea, a heavenly blue; the warm air breathed heavenly odors; flaming macaws wheeled overhead; humming-birds, more gorgeous than any flower, buzzed round their heads, and amazed the eye with delight, then cooled it with the deep green of the jungle into which they dived.

It was a Paradise with the sun smiling down on it, and the ocean smiling up, and the air impregnated with love. Here they were both content now to spend the rest of their days—

“The world forgetting; by the world forgot.”

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE Springbok arrived in due course at longitude 103 deg. 30 min., but saw no island. This was dispiriting; but still Captain Moreland did not despair.

He asked General Rolleston to examine the writing carefully, and tell him was that Miss Rolleston's hand-writing.

The General shook his head sorrowfully.

“No,” said he; “it is nothing like my child's hand.”

“Why, all the better,” said Captain Moreland; “the lady has got somebody about her who knows a thing or two. The man that could catch wild ducks and turn 'em into postmen could hit on the longitude somehow; and he doesn't pretend to be exact in the latitude.”

Upon this he ran northward 400 miles; which took him three days; for they stopped at night.

No island.

He then ran south 500 miles; stopping at night.

No island.

Then he took the vessel zigzag.

Just before sunset, one lovely day, the man at the mast-head sang out:—

“On deck there!”

“Hullo!”

“Something in sight; on our weather-bow.”

“What is it?”

“Looks like a mast. No. Don't know what it is.”

“Point.”

The sailor pointed with his finger.

Captain Moreland ordered the ship's course to be altered accordingly. By this time General Rolleston was on deck. The ship ran two miles on the new course; and all this time the topman's glass was levelled, and the crew climbed about the rigging, all eyes and ears.

At last the clear hail came down.

“I can make it out now, sir.”

“What is it?”

“It is a palm-tree.”

The captain jumped on a gun, and waved his hat grandly, and instantly the vessel rang with a lusty cheer; and for once, sailors gabbled like washerwomen.

They ran till they saw the island in the moonlight, and the giant palm, black, and sculptured out of the violet sky; then they set the lead going, and it warned them not to come too close. They anchored off the west coast.

At daybreak they moved slowly on, still sounding as they went; and rounding the west point,

General Rolleston saw written on the guanoed rocks in large letters:—

AN ENGLISH LADY WRECKED HERE. HASTE TO HER RESCUE.

He and Moreland shook hands; and how their eyes glistened!

Presently there was a stranger inscription still upon the rocks—a rough outline of the island on an enormous scale, showing the coast-line, the reefs, the shallow water and the deep water.

“Ease her! Stop her!”

The captain studied this original chart with his glass, and crept slowly on for the west passage.

But, warned by the soundings marked on the rock, he did not attempt to go through the passage, but came to an anchor, and lowered his boat.

The sailors were all on the *qui vive* to land; but the captain, to their infinite surprise, told them only three persons would land that morning—himself, his son, and General Rolleston.

The fact is, this honest captain had got a misgiving, founded on a general view of human nature. He expected to find the girl with two or three sailors, one of them united to her by some nautical ceremony, duly witnessed, but such as a *military* officer of distinction could hardly be expected to approve. He got into the boat in a curious state of delight, dashed with uncomfortable suspense; and they rowed gently for the west passage.

As for General Rolleston, now it was he needed all his fortitude. Suppose the lady was not Helen! After all, the chances were against her being there. Suppose she was dead and buried in that island! Suppose that fatal disease, with which she had sailed, had been accelerated by hardships, and Providence permitted him only to receive her last sigh. All these misgivings crowded on him the moment he drew so near the object which had looked all brightness so long as it was unattainable. He sat pale and brave, in the boat; but his doubts and fears were greater than his hope.

They rounded Telegraph Point, and in a moment Paradise Bay burst on them, and Hazel's boat within a hundred yards of them. It was half-tide. They beached the boat, and General Rolleston landed. Captain Moreland grasped his hand, and said, “Call us if it is all right.”

General Rolleston returned the pressure of that honest hand, and marched up the beach just as if he was going into action.

He came to the boat. It had an awning over the stern, and was clearly used as a sleeping-place. A series of wooden pipes standing on uprights led from this up to the cliff. The pipes were in fact mere sections of the sago-tree with the soft pith driven out. As this was manifestly a tube of communication, General Rolleston followed it until he came to a sort of verandah with a cave opening on it; he entered the cave, and was dazzled by its most unexpected beauty. He seemed to be in a gigantic nautilus. Roof and sides and the very chimney were one blaze of mother-of-pearl. But, after the first start, brighter to him was an old shawl he saw on a nail; for that showed it was a woman's abode. He tore down the old shawl and carried it to the light. He recognized it as Helen's. Her rugs

were in a corner; he rushed in and felt them all over with trembling hands. They were still warm, though she had left her bed some time. He came out wild with joy, and shouted to Moreland, "She is alive! She is alive! She is alive!" Then fell on his knees and thanked God.

A cry came down to him from above: he looked up as he knelt, and there was a female figure dressed in white, stretching out its hands as if it would fly down to him. Its eyes gleamed; he knew them all that way off. He stretched out his hands as eloquently, and then he got up to meet her; but the stout soldier's limbs were stiffer than of old; and he got up so slowly, that ere he could take a step, there came flying to him, with little screams and inarticulate cries, no living skeleton, nor consumptive young lady, but a grand creature, tanned here and there, rosy as the morn, and full of lusty vigor; a body all health, strength, and beauty, a soul all love. She flung herself all over him in a moment, with cries of love unspeakable; and then it was, "Oh, my darling, my darling! Oh, my own, own! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Oh, oh, oh, oh! Is it you? is it? can it? Papa! papa!" then little convulsive hands patting him, and feeling his beard and shoulders; then a sudden hail of violent kisses on his head, his eyes, his arms, his hands, his knees. Then a stout soldier, broken down by this, and sobbing for joy. "Oh, my child! My flesh and blood! Oh, oh, oh!" Then all manhood melted away except paternity; and a father turned mother, and clinging, kissing, and rocking to and fro with his child, and both crying for joy as if their hearts would burst.

A sight for angels to look down at and rejoice. But what mortal pen could paint it?

CHAPTER L.

THEY gave a long time to pure joy before either of them cared to put questions or compare notes. But at last he asked her, "Who was on the island besides her?"

"Oh," said she, "only my guardian angel. Poor Mr. Welch died the first week we were here."

He parted the hair on her brow, and kissed it tenderly. "And who is your guardian angel?"

"Why, you are now, my own papa: and well you have proved it. To think of your being the one to come at your age!"

"Well, never mind me. Who has taken such care of my child?—this the sick girl they frightened me about!"

"Indeed, papa, I was a dying girl. My very hand was wasted. Look at it now; brown as a berry, but so plump; you owe that to him: and, papa, I can walk twenty miles without fatigue: and so strong: I could take you up in my arms and carry, I know. But I am content to eat you." (A shower of kisses.) "I hope you will like him."

"My own Helen. Ah! I am a happy old man this day. What is his name?"

"Mr. Hazel. He is a clergyman. Oh, papa, I hope you will like him, for he has saved my life more than once: and then he has been so generous, so delicate, so patient; for I used him very ill at first; and you will find my character

as much improved as my health: and all owing to Mr. Hazel. He is a clergyman; and oh, so good, so humble, so clever, so self-denying! Ah! how can I ever repay him?"

"Well, I shall be glad to see this paragon, and shake him by the hand. You may imagine what I feel to any one that is kind to my darling. An old gentleman? about my age?"

"Oh no, papa."

"Hum!"

"If he had been old I should not be here; for he has had to fight for me against cruel men with knives: and work like a horse. He built me a hut, and made me this cave, and almost killed himself in my service. Poor Mr. Hazel!"

"How old is he?"

"Dearest papa, I never asked him that: but I think he is four or five years older than me, and a hundred years better than I shall ever be, I am afraid. What is the matter darling?"

"Nothing, child, nothing."

"Don't tell me. Can't I read your dear face?"

"Come, let me read yours. Look me in the face, now: full."

He took her by the shoulders, firmly, but not the least roughly, and looked straight into her hazel eyes. She blushed at this ordeal,—blushed scarlet; but her eyes, pure as Heaven, faced his fairly, though with a puzzled look.

He concluded this paternal inspection by kissing her on the brow. "I was an old fool," he muttered.

"What do you say, dear papa?"

"Nothing, nothing. Kiss me again. Well, love, you had better find this guardian angel of yours, that I may take him by the hand and give him a father's blessing, and make him some little return by carrying him home to England along with my darling."

"I'll call him, papa. Where can he be gone, I wonder?"

She ran out to the terrace, and called,—

"Mr. Hazel! Mr. Hazel! I don't see him; but he can't be far off. Mr. Hazel!"

Then she came back and made her father sit down: and she sat at his knee, beaming with delight.

"Ah, papa," said she, "it was you who loved me best in England. It was you that came to look for me."

"No," said he, "there are others there that love you as well in their way. Poor Wardlaw! on his sick-bed for you, cut down like a flower the moment he heard you were lost on the Prosperpine. Ah, and I have broken faith."

"That is a story," said Helen; "you couldn't."

"For a moment, I mean; I promised the dear old man—he furnished the ship, the men, and the money to find you. He says you are as much his daughter as mine."

"Well, but what did you promise him?" said Helen, blushing and interrupting hastily, for she could not bear the turn matters were taking.

"Oh, only to give you the second kiss from Arthur. Come, better late than never." She knelt before him, and put out her forehead instead of her lips. "There," said the General, "that kiss is from Arthur Wardlaw, your intended. Why, who the deuce is this?"

A young man was standing wonder-struck at the entrance, and had heard the General's last words; they went through him like a knife. General Rolleston stared at him.

Helen uttered an ejaculation of pleasure, and said, "This is my dear father, and he wants to thank you—"

"I don't understand this," said the General. "I thought you told me there was nobody on the island but you and your guardian angel. Did you count this poor fellow for nobody? Why, he did you a good turn once."

"Oh papa!" said Helen, reproachfully. "Why, this is my guardian angel. This is Mr. Hazel."

The General looked from one to another in amazement, then he said to Helen, "This your Mr. Hazel?"

"Yes, papa."

"Why, you don't mean to tell me you don't know this man?"

"Know him, papa! why, of course I know Mr. Hazel; know him with her hands extended, as if to guard him from another blow, and at the same time deprecate his resentment. But then she saw his dejected attitude; and she stood confounded, looking from one to the other.

The General lost patience. "Are you out of your senses?" said he; "this man here is no Hazel. Why, this is James Seaton—our gardener—a ticket-of-leave man."

CHAPTER LI.

At this fearful insult Helen drew back from her father with a cry of dismay, and then moved towards Hazel with her hands extended, as if to guard him from another blow, and at the same time deprecate his resentment. But then she saw his dejected attitude; and she stood confounded, looking from one to the other.

"I knew him in a moment by his beard," said the General, coolly.

"Ah!" cried Helen, and stood transfixed. She glared at Hazel and his beard with dilating eyes, and began to tremble.

Then she crept back to her father and held him tight; but still looked over her shoulder at Hazel with dilating eyes and paling cheek.

As for Hazel, his deportment all this time went far towards convicting him; he leaned against the side of the cave, and hung his head in silence: and his face was ashy pale. When General Rolleston saw his deep distress, and the sudden terror and repugnance the revelation seemed to create in his daughter's mind, he felt sorry he had gone so far, and said: "Well, well; it is not for me to judge you harshly; for you have laid me under a deep obligation: and, after all, I can see good reasons why you should conceal your name from other people. But you ought to have told my daughter the truth."

Helen interrupted him; or, rather, she seemed unconscious he was speaking. She had never for an instant taken her eye off the culprit: and now she spoke to him:—

"Who and what are you, sir?"

"My name is Robert Penfold."

"Penfold! Seaton!" cried Helen. "Alias upon alias!" And she turned to her father in despair. Then to Hazel again. "Are you what papa says?"

"I am."

"Oh, papa! papa!" cried Helen, "then there is no truth nor honesty in all the world!" And she turned her back on Robert Penfold, and cried and sobbed upon her father's breast.

Oh, the amazement and anguish of that hour! The pure affection and reverence that would have blest a worthy man, wasted on a convict! Her heart's best treasures flung on a dunghill! This is a woman's greatest loss on earth. And Helen sank, and sobbed under it.

General Rolleston, whose own heart was fortified, took a shallow view of the situation; and, moreover, Helen's face was hidden on his bosom; and what he saw was Hazel's manly and intelligent countenance pale and dragged with agony and shame.

"Come, come," he said gently, "don't cry about it; it is not your fault: and don't be too hard on the man. You told me he had saved your life."

"Would he had not!" said the sobbing girl.

"There, Seaton," said the General. "Now you see the consequences of deceit; it wipes out the deepest obligations." He resumed in a different tone, "But not with me. This is a woman: but I am a man, and know how a bad man could have abused the situation in which I found you two."

"Not worse than he has done," cried Helen.

"What do you tell me, girl!" said General Rolleston, beginning to tremble in his turn.

"What could he do worse than steal my esteem and veneration, and drag my heart's best feelings in the dirt? Oh, where—where can I ever look for a guide, instructor, and faithful friend after this? He seemed all truth; and he is all a lie: the world is all a lie: would I could leave it this moment!"

"This is all romantic nonsense," said General Rolleston, beginning to be angry. "You are a little fool, and in your ignorance and innocence have no idea how well this young fellow has behaved on the whole. I tell you what;—in spite of this one fault, I should like to shake him by the hand. I will too; and then admonish him afterwards."

"You shall not. You shall not," cried Helen, seizing him almost violently by the arm. "You take him by the hand! A monster! How dare you steal into my esteem? How dare you be a miracle of goodness, self-denial, learning, and every virtue that a lady might worship and thank God for, when all the time you are a vile convicted—"

"I'll thank you not to say that word," said Hazel, firmly.

"I'll call you what you are, if I choose," said Helen, defiantly. But for all that she did not do it. She said piteously, "What offense had I ever given you? What crime had I ever committed, that you must make me the victim of this diabolical deceit? Oh, sir, what powers of mind you have wasted to achieve this victory over a poor unoffending girl! What was your motive? What good could come of it to you? He won't speak to me. He is not even penitent. Sullen and obstinate! He shall be taken to England, and well punished for it. Papa, it is your duty."

"Helen," said the General, "you ladies are rather too fond of hitting a man when he is down. And you speak daggers, as the saying

is; and then wish you had bitten your tongue off sooner. You are my child, but you are also a British subject; and, if you charge me on my duty to take this man to England and have him imprisoned, I must. But, before you go that length, you had better hear the whole story."

"Sir," said Robert Penfold, quietly, "I will go back to prison this minute, if she wishes it."

"How dare you interrupt papa?" said Helen, haughtily, but with a great sob.

"Come, come," said the General, "be quiet, both of you, and let me say my say." (To Robert.)

"You had better turn your head away, for I am a straight-forward man, and I'm going to show her you are not a villain, but a madman. This Robert Penfold wrote me a letter, imploring me to find him some honest employment, however menial. That looked well, and I made him my gardener. He was a capital gardener; but one fine day he caught sight of you. *You* are a very lovely girl, though you don't seem to know it; and *he* is a madman; and he fell in love with you." Helen uttered an ejaculation of great surprise. The General resumed: "He can only have seen you at a distance, or you would recognize him; but (really it is laughable) he saw you somehow, though you did not see him, and— Well, his insanity hurt himself, and did not hurt you. You remember how he suspected burglars, and watched night after night under your window. That was out of love for you. His insanity took the form of fidelity and humble devotion. He got a wound for his pains, poor fellow! and you made Arthur Wardlaw get him a clerk's place."

"Arthur Wardlaw!" cried Seaton. "Was it to him I owed it?" and he groaned aloud.

Said Helen: "He hates poor Arthur, his benefactor." Then to Penfold: "If you are that James Seaton, you received a letter from me."

"I did," said Penfold; and, putting his hand in his bosom, he drew out a letter and showed it her.

"Let me see it," said Helen.

"Oh no! don't take this from me, too," said he, piteously.

General Rolleston continued. "The day you sailed he disappeared; and I am afraid not without some wild idea of being in the same ship with you. This was very reprehensible. Do you hear, young man? But what is the consequence? You get shipwrecked together, and the young madman takes such care of you that I find you well and hearty, and calling him your guardian angel. And—another thing to his credit—he has set his wits to work to restore you to the world. These ducks, one of which brings me here? Of course it was he who contrived that, not you. Young man you must learn to look things in the face; this young lady is not of your sphere, to begin; and, in the next place, she is engaged to Mr. Arthur Wardlaw; and I am come out in his steamboat to take her to him. And as for you, Helen, take my advice; think what most convicts are, compared to this one. Shut your eyes entirely to his folly as I shall; and let you and I think only of his good deeds, and so make him all the return we can. You and I will go on board the steamboat directly; and, when we are there, we can tell Moreland there is somebody else on the island." He then turned to Penfold, and said: "My

daughter and I will keep in the after part of the vessel, and any body that likes can leave the ship at Valparaiso. Helen, I know it is wrong; but what can I do?—I am so happy. You are alive and well; how can I punish or afflict a human creature to-day? and, above all, how can I crush this unhappy young man, without whom I should never have seen you again in this world? My daughter! my dear lost child!" And he held her at arm's length and gazed at her, and then drew her to his bosom; and for him Robert Penfold ceased to exist except as a man that had saved his daughter.

"Papa," said Helen, after a long pause, "just make him tell why he could not trust to me. Why he passed himself off to me for a clergyman."

"I am a clergyman," said Robert Penfold.

"Oh!" said Helen, shocked to find him so hardened, as she thought. She lifted her hands to heaven, and the tears streamed from her eyes.

"Well, sir," said she, faintly, "I see I can not reach your conscience. One question more and then I have done with you forever. Why in all these months that we have been alone, and that you have shown me the nature, I don't say of an honest man, but of an angel,—yes, papa, of an angel,—why could you not show me one humble virtue, sincerity? It belongs to a man. Why could you not say, 'I have committed one crime in my life, but repented forever; judge by this confession, and by what you have seen of me, whether I shall ever commit another. Take me as I am, and esteem me as a penitent and more worthy man; but I will not deceive you and pass for a paragon.' Why could you not say as much as this to me? If you loved me, why deceive me so cruelly?"

These words, uttered no longer harshly, but in a mournful, faint, despairing voice, produced an effect the speaker little expected. Robert Penfold made two attempts to speak, but though he opened his mouth, and his lips quivered, he could get no word out. He began to choke with emotion; and, though he shed no tears, the convulsion that goes with weeping in weaker natures overpowered him in a way that was almost terrible.

"Confound it!" said General Rolleston, "this is monstrous of you, Helen; it is barbarous. You are not like your poor mother."

She was pale and trembling, and the tears flowing; but she showed her native obstinacy. She said hoarsely: "Papa, you are blind. He *must* answer me. He knows he must!"

"I must," said Robert Penfold, gasping still. Then he manned himself by a mighty effort, and repeated with dignity, "I will." There was a pause while the young man still struggled for composure and self-command.

"Was I not often on the point of telling you my sad story? Then is it fair to say that I should never have told it you? But, oh Miss Rolleston, you don't know what agony it may be to an unfortunate man to tell the truth. There are accusations so terrible, so *defiling*, that, when a man has proved them false, they stick to him and soil him. Such an accusation I labor under, and a judge and a jury have branded me. If they had called me a murderer, I would have told you; but *that* is such a dirty crime. I feared the prejudices of the world. I dreaded to see

your face alter to me. Yes, I trembled, and hesitated, and asked myself whether a man is bound to repeat a foul slander against himself, even when thirteen shallow men have said it, and made the lie law."

"There," said General Rolleston, "I thought how it would be, Helen; you have tormented him into defending himself, tooth and nail; so now we shall have the old story; he is innocent; I never knew a convict that wasn't, if he found a fool to listen to him. I decline to hear another word. You needn't excuse yourself for changing your name; I excuse it, and that is enough. But the boat is waiting, and we can't stay to hear you justify a felony."

"I AM NOT A FELON. I AM A MARTYR."

CHAPTER LII.

ROBERT PENFOLD drew himself up to his full height, and uttered these strange words with a sad majesty that was very imposing. But General Rolleston, steeled by experience of convicts, their plausibility, and their histrionic powers, was staggered only for a moment. He deigned no reply; but told Helen Captain Moreland was waiting for her, and she had better go on board at once.

She stood like a statue.

"No, papa, I'll not turn my back on him till I know whether he is a felon or a martyr."

"My poor child, has he caught you at once with a clever phrase? A judge and a jury have settled that."

"They settled it as you would settle it, by refusing to hear me."

"Have I refused to hear you?" said Helen.

"What do I care for steamboats and captains? If I stay here to all eternity, I'll know from your own lips and your own face whether you are a felon or a martyr. It is no phrase, papa. He is a felon or a martyr; and I am a most unfortunate girl, or else a base, disloyal one."

"Fiddle-dee," said General Rolleston, angrily. Then, looking at his watch: "I give you five minutes to humbug us in—if you can."

Robert Penfold sighed patiently. But from that moment he ignored General Rolleston, and looked to Helen only. And she fixed her eyes upon his face with a tenacity and an intensity of observation that surpassed anything he had ever seen in his life. It dazzled him; but it did not dismay him.

"Miss Rolleston," said he, "my history can be told in the time my prejudiced judge allows me. I am a clergyman, and a private tutor at Oxford. One of my pupils was—Arthur Wardlaw. I took an interest in him because my father, Michael Penfold, was in Wardlaw's employ. This Arthur Wardlaw had a talent for mimicry; he mimicked one of the college officers publicly and offensively, and was about to be expelled, and that would have ruined his immediate prospects: for his father is just, but stern. I fought hard for him, and, being myself popular with the authorities, I got him off. He was grateful, or seemed to be, and we became greater friends than ever. We confided in each other. He told me he was in debt in Oxford, and much alarmed lest it should reach his father's ears, and lose him the promised partner-

ship. I told him I was desirous to buy a small living near Oxford, which was then vacant; but I had only saved £400, and the price was £1000; I had no means of raising the balance. Then he said, 'Borrow £2000 of my father; give me fourteen hundred of it, and take your own time to repay the £600. I shall be my father's partner in a month or two,' said he; 'you can pay us back by instalments.' I thought this very kind of him. I did not want the living for myself, but to give my dear father certain comforts and country air every week; he needed it: he was born in the country. Well, I came to London about this business; and a stranger called on me, and said he came from Mr. Arthur Wardlaw, who was not well enough to come himself. He produced a note of hand for £2000, signed John Wardlaw, and made me indorse it, and told me where to get it cashed; he would come next day for Arthur Wardlaw's share of the money. Well, I suspected no ill; would you? I went and got the note discounted, and locked the money up. It was not my money: the greater part was Arthur Wardlaw's. That same evening a policeman called, and asked several questions, which of course I answered. He then got me out of the house on some pretense, and arrested me as a forger."

"Oh!" cried Helen.

"I forgot the clergyman; I was a gentleman, and a man, insulted, and I knocked the officer down directly. But his myrmidons overpowered me. I was tried at the Central Criminal Court on two charges. First, the Crown (as they call the attorney that draws the indictment) charged me with forging the note of hand; and then with not forging it, but passing it, well knowing that somebody else had forged it. Well, Undercliff, the expert, swore positively that the forged note was not written by me; and the Crown, as they call it, was defeated on that charge; but being proved a liar in a court of justice did not abash my accuser; the second charge was pressed with equal confidence. The note, you are to understand, was forged: that admits of no doubt; and I passed it; the question was whether I passed it knowing it to be forged. How was that to be determined? And here it was that my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, destroyed me. Of course, as soon as I was put in prison, I wrote and sent to Arthur Wardlaw. Would you believe it? he would not come to me. He would not even write. Then, as the time drew near, I feared he was a traitor. I treated him like one. I told my solicitor to drag him into court as my witness, and make him tell the truth. The clerk went down accordingly, and found he kept his door always locked; but the clerk outwitted him, and served him with the subpoena in his bedroom, before he could crawl under the bed. But he baffled us at last; he never appeared in the witness-box; and when my counsel asked the court to imprison him, his father swore he could not come: he was dying, and all out of sympathy with me. Fine sympathy! that closed the lips, and concealed the truth; one syllable of which would have saved his friend and benefactor from a calamity worse than death. Is the truth poison, that to tell it makes a sick man die? Is the truth hell, that a dying man refuses to speak it? How can a man die better than speaking the

truth? How can he die worse than withholding it? I believe his sickness and his death were lies like himself. For want of one word from Arthur Wardlaw to explain that I had every reason to expect a note of hand from him, the jury condemned me. They were twelve honest but shallow men—invited to go inside another man's bosom, and guess what was there. They guessed that I knew and understood a thing which to this hour I neither know nor understand, by God!"

He paused a moment, then resumed:—

"I believe they founded their conjecture on my knocking down the officer. There was a reason for you! Why, forgers and their confederates are reptiles, and have no fight in them. Experience proves this. But these twelve men did not go by experience; they guessed, like babies, and, after much hesitation, condemned me; but recommended me to mercy. Mercy! What mercy did I deserve? Either I was innocent, or hanging was too good for me. No; in their hearts they doubted my guilt; and their doubt took that timid form instead of acquitting me. I was amazed at the verdict, and asked leave to tell the judge why Arthur Wardlaw had defied the court, and absented himself as my witness. Had the judge listened for one minute, he would have seen I was innocent. But no. I was in England, where the mouth of the accused is stopped, if he is fool enough to employ counsel. The judge stopped my mouth, as your father just now tried to stop it; and they branded me as a felon.

"Up to that moment my life was honorable and worthy. Since that moment I have never wronged a human creature. Men pass from virtue to vice, from vice to crime; this is the ladder a soul goes down; but you are invited to believe that I jumped from innocence into a filthy felony, and then jumped back again none the worse, and was a gardener that fought for his employer, and a lover that controlled his passion. It is a lie—a lie that ought not to take in a child. But prejudice degrades a man below the level of a child. I'll say no more; my patience is exhausted by wrongs and insults. I am as honest a man as ever breathed; and the place where we stand is mine, for I made it. Leave it and me this moment. Go to England, and leave me where the animals, more reasonable than you, have the sense to see my real character. I'll not sail in the same ship with any man, nor any woman either, who can look me in the face, and take me for a felon.

He swelled and cowered with the just wrath of an honest man driven to bay; and his eye shot black lightning. He was sublime.

Helen cowered; but her spirited old father turned red, and said haughtily; "we take you at your word, and leave you, you insolent vagabond! Follow me this instant, Helen!"

And he marched out of the cavern in a fury.

But, instead of following him, Helen stood stock-still, and cowered, and cowered till she seemed sinking forward to the ground, and she got hold of Robert Penfold's hand, and kissed it, and moaned over it.

"Martyr! Martyr!" she whispered, and still kissed his hand, like a slave offering her master pity, and asking pardon.

"Martyr! Martyr! Every word is true—true as my love."

In this attitude, and with these words on her lips, they were surprised by General Rolleston, who came back, astonished at his daughter not following him. Judge of his amazement now.

"What does this mean?" he cried, turning pale with anger.

"It means that he has spoken the truth, and that I shall imitate him. He is my martyr, and my love. When others cast shame on you, then it is time for me to show my heart. James Seaton, I love you for your madness and your devotion to her whom you had only seen at a distance. Ah! that was love. John Hazel, I love you for all that has passed between us. What can any other man be to me?—or woman to you? But most of all, I love *you*, Robert Penfold—my hero and my martyr. When I am told to your face that you are a felon, then to your face, I say you are my idol, my hero, and my martyr. Love! the word is too tame, too common. I worship you, I adore you! How beautiful you are when you are angry! How noble you are now you forgive me! for you do forgive me, Robert; you must, you shall. No; you will not send your Helen away from you for her one fault so soon repented! Show me you forgive me; show me you love me still, almost as much as I love you. He is crying. Oh, my darling, my darling, my darling!" And she was round his neck in a moment, with tears and tender kisses, the first she had ever given him.

Ask yourself whether they were returned.

A groan, or rather we might say, a snort of fury, interrupted the most blissful moment either of these young creatures had ever known. It came from General Rolleston, now white with wrath and horror.

"You villain!" he cried,

Helen threw herself upon him, and put her hand before his mouth.

"Not a word more, or I shall forget I am your daughter. No one is to blame but I. I love him. I made him love me. He has been trying hard not to love me so much. But I am a woman; and could not deny myself the glory and the joy of being loved better than woman was ever loved before. And so I am; I am. Kill me, if you like; insult me, if you will: but not a word against him, or I give him my hand, and we live and die together on this island. Oh, papa! he has often saved that life you value so; and I have saved his. He is all the world to me. Have pity on your child. Have pity on him who carries my heart in his bosom."

She flung herself on her knees, and strained him tight, and implored him, with head thrown back, and little clutching hands, and eloquent eyes.

Ah! it is hard to resist the voice and look and clinging of a man's own flesh and blood. Children are so strong—upon their knees; their dear faces, bright copies of our own, are just the height of our hearts then.

The old man was staggered, was almost melted. "Give me a moment to think," said he, in a broken voice. "This blow takes my breath away."

Helen rose, and laid her head upon her father's shoulder, and still pleaded for her love by her soft touch and her tears that now flowed freely.

He turned to Penfold with all the dignity of age and station. "Mr. Penfold," said he, with grave politeness, "after what my daughter has said, I must treat you as a man of honor, or I must insult her. Well, then, I expect you to show me you are what she thinks you, and are not what a court of justice has proclaimed you. Sir, this young lady is engaged with her own free will to a gentleman who is universally esteemed, and has never been accused to *his face* of any unworthy act. Relying on her plighted word, the Wardlaws have fitted out a steamer and searched the Pacific, and found her. Can you, as a man of honor, advise her to stay here and compromise her own honor in every way? Ought she to break faith with her betrothed on account of vague accusations made behind his back?"

"It was only in self-defense I accused Mr. Arthur Wardlaw," said Robert Penfold.

General Rolleston resumed:—

"You said just now there are accusations which soil a man. If you were in my place, would you let your daughter marry a man of honor, who had unfortunately been found guilty of a felony?"

Robert groaned and hesitated, but he said, "No."

"Then what is to be done? She must either keep her plighted word, or else break it. For whom? For a gentleman she esteems and loves, but can not marry. A leper may be a saint; but I would rather bury my child than marry her to a leper. A convict may be a saint; but I'll kill her with my own hand sooner than she shall marry a convict: and in your heart and conscience you can not blame me. Were you a father, you would do the same. What then remains for her and me but to keep faith? and what can you do better than leave her, and carry away her everlasting esteem and her father's gratitude? It is no use being good by halves, or bad by halves. You must either be a selfish villain, and urge her to abandon all shame, and live here on this island with you forever, or you must be a brave and honest man, and bow to a parting that is inevitable. Consider, sir; your eloquence and her pity have betrayed this young lady into a confession that separates you. Her enforced residence here with you has been innocent. It would be innocent no longer, now she has been so mad as to own she loves you. And I tell you frankly, if, after that confession, you insist on going on board the steamer with her, I must take you; humanity requires it; but if I do, I shall hand you over to the law as a convict escaped before his time. Perhaps I ought to do so as it is; but that is not certain; I don't know to what country this island belongs. I may have no right to capture you in strange dominions; but an English ship is England,—and if you set foot in the Springbok you are lost. Now, then, you are a man of honor; you love my child truly, and not selfishly:—you have behaved nobly until to-day; go one step farther on the right road; call worldly honor and the God whose vows you have taken, sir, to your aid, and do your duty."

"Oh, man, man!" cried Robert Penfold, "you ask more of me than flesh and blood can bear. What shall I say? What shall I do?"

Helen replied, calmly: "Take my hand, and let us die together, since we can not live together with honor."

General Rolleston groaned. "For this, then, I have traversed one ocean, and searched another and found my child. I am nothing to her,—nothing. Oh, who would be a father!" He sat down oppressed with shame and grief, and bowed his stately head in manly but pathetic silence.

"Oh, papa, papa!" cried Helen, "forgive your ungrateful child!" And she kneeled and sobbed, with her forehead on his knees.

Then Robert Penfold, in the midst of his own agony, found room in that great suffering heart of his for pity. He knelt down himself and prayed for help in this bitter trial. He rose haggard with the struggle, but languid and resigned, like one whose death-warrant has been read.

"Sir," said he, "there is but one way. You must take her home; and I shall stay here."

"Leave you all alone on this island!" said Helen. "Never! If you stay here, I shall stay to comfort you."

"I decline that offer. I am beyond the reach of comfort."

"Think what you do, Robert," said Helen, with unnatural calmness. "If you have no pity on yourself have pity on us. Would you rob me of the very life you have taken such pains to save? My poor father will carry nothing to England but my dead body. Long before we reach that country I loved so well, and now hate for its stupidity and cruelty to you, my soul will have flown back to this island to watch over you, Robert. You bid me to abandon you to solitude and despair. Neither of you two love me half as much as I love you both."

General Rolleston sighed deeply. "If I thought that—" said he. Then, in a faint voice, "My own courage fails me now. I look into my heart, and I see that my child's life is dearer to me than all the world. She was dying, they say. Suppose I send Moreland to the Continent for a clergyman, and marry you. Then you can live on this island forever. Only you must let me live here too; for I could never show my face again in England after acting so dishonorably. It will be a miserable end of a life passed in honor; but I suppose it will not be for long. Shame can kill as quickly as disappointed love."

"Robert, Robert!" cried Helen, in agony.

The martyr saw that he was master of the situation, and must be either base or very noble,—there was no middle way. He leaned his head on his hands, and thought with all his might.

"Hush!" said Helen: "he is wiser than we are. Let him speak."

"If I thought you would pine and die upon the voyage, no power should part us. But you are not such a coward. If my life depended on yours, would you not live?"

"You know I would."

"When I was wrecked on White Water Island, you played the man. Not one woman in a thousand could have launched a boat, and sailed her with a boat-hook for a mast, and—"

Helen interrupted him. "It was nothing; I loved you. I love you better now."

"I believe it, and therefore I ask you to rise above your sex once more, and play the man for me. This time it is not my life you are to rescue, but that which is more precious still: my good name."

"Ah! that would be worth living for!" cried Helen.

"You will find it very hard to do; but not harder for a woman than to launch a boat, and sail her without a mast. See my father, Michael Penfold. See Undercliff, the expert. See the solicitor, the counsel. Sift the whole story; and, above all, find out why Arthur Wardlaw dared not enter the witness-box. Be obstinate as a man; be supple as a woman; and don't talk of dying when there is a friend to be rescued from dishonor by living and working."

"Die! while I can rescue you from death or dishonor! I will not be so base. Ah, Robert, Robert, how well you know me!"

"Yes, I do know you, Helen. I believe that great soul of yours will keep your body strong to do this brave work for him you love, and who loves you. And as for me, I am man enough to live for years upon this island, if you will only promise me two things."

"I promise, then."

"Never to die, and never to marry Arthur Wardlaw, until you have reversed that lying sentence which has blasted me. Lay your hand on your father's head, and promise me that."

Helen laid her hand upon her father's head, and said: "I pledge my honor not to die, if life is possible, and never to marry any man, until I have reversed that lying sentence which has blasted the angel I love."

"And I pledge myself to help her," said General Rolleston, warmly, "for now I *know* you are a man of honor. I have too often been deceived by eloquence to listen much to that. But now you have proved by your actions what you are. You pass a forged check, knowing it to be forged! I'd stake my salvation it's a lie. There's my hand. God comfort you! God reward you, my noble fellow!"

"I hope he will, sir," sobbed Robert Penfold. "You are her father; and you take my hand; perhaps that will be sweet to think of by and by; but no joy can enter my heart now; it is broken. Take her away at once, sir. Flesh is weak. My powers of endurance are exhausted."

General Rolleston acted promptly on this advice. He rolled up her rugs, and the things she had made, and Robert had the courage to take them down to the boat. Then he came back, and the General took her bag to the boat.

All this time the girl herself sat wringing her hands in anguish, and not a tear. It was beyond that now.

As he passed Robert, the General said: "Take leave of her alone. I will come for her in five minutes. You see how sure I feel you are a man of honor."

When Robert went in, she rose and tottered to him, and fell on his neck. She saw it was the death-bed of their love, and she kissed his eyes, and clung to him. They moaned over each other, and clung to each other in mute despair.

The General came back, and he and Robert took Helen, shivering and fainting, to the boat. As the boat put off, she awoke from her stupor, and put out her hands to Robert with one piercing cry.

They were parted.

CHAPTER LIII.

IN that curious compound the human heart, a respectable motive is sometimes connected with a criminal act. And it was so with Joseph Wylie: he had formed an attachment to Nancy Rouse, and her price was three thousand pounds.

This Nancy Rouse was a character. She was General Rolleston's servant for many years; her place was the kitchen: but she was a woman of such restless activity, and so wanting in the proper pride of a servant, that she would help a housemaid, or a lady's maid, or do any thing almost, except be idle: to use her own words, she was one as couldn't abide to sit mumchance. That fatal foe to domestic industry, the London Journal, fluttered in vain down her area, for she could not read. She supported a sick mother out of her wages, aided by a few presents of money and clothes from Helen Rolleston, who had a great regard for Nancy, and knew what a hard fight she had to keep a sick woman out of her twenty pounds a year.

In love Nancy was unfortunate; her buxom looks and sterling virtues were balanced by a provoking sagacity, and an irritating habit of speaking her mind. She humbled her lovers' vanity, one after another, and they fled. Her heart smarted more than once.

Nancy was ambitious; and her first rise in life took place as follows: When the Rollestons went to Australia, she had a good cry at parting with Helen; but there was no help for it: she could not leave her mother. However, she told Helen she could not stomach any other service, and since she must be parted, was resolved to better herself. This phrase is sometimes drolly applied by servants, because they throw independence into the scale. In Nancy's case it meant setting up as a washerwoman. Helen opened her hazel eyes with astonishment at this, the first round in the ladder of Nancy's ambition; however she gave her ten pounds, and thirty introductions, twenty-five of which missed fire, and with the odd five Nancy set up her tub in the suburbs, and by her industry, geniality, and frugality, got on tolerably well. In due course she rented a small house backed by a small green, and advertised for a gentleman lodger. She soon got one; and soon got rid of him. However, she was never long without one.

Nancy met Joseph Wylie in company: and, as sailors are brisk wooers, he soon became her acknowledged squire, and made some inroad into her heart, though she kept on the defensive, warned by past experience.

Wylie's love-making had a droll feature about it; it was most of it carried on in the presence of three washerwomen, because Nancy had no time to spare from her work, and Wylie had no time to lose in his wooing, being on shore for a limited period. And this absence of superfluous delicacy on his part gave him an unfair advantage over the tallow-chandler's foreman, his only rival at present. Many a sly thrust, and many a hearty laugh, from his female auditors, greeted his amorous eloquence: but, for all that, they sided with him, and Nancy felt her importance, and brightened along with her mates at the sailor's approach, which was generally announced by a cheerful hail. He was good company, to use Nancy's own phrase, and she ac-

cepted him as a sweetheart on probation. But, when Mr. Wylie urged her to marry him, she demurred, and gave a string of reasons, all of which the sailor and his allies, the subordinate washerwomen, combated in full conclave.

Then she spoke out: "My lad, the wash-tub is a saddle as won't carry double. I've seen poverty enough in my mother's house; it sha'n't come in at my door to drive love out o' window. Two comes together with just enough for two; next year instead of two they are three, and one of the three can't work and wants a servant extra, and by and by there is half a dozen, and the money coming in at the spigot and going out at the bung-hole."

One day, in the middle of his wooing, she laid down her iron, and said; "You come along with me. And I wonder how much work will be done whilst my back is turned, for you three gabbling and wondering what ever I'm a going to do with this here sailor."

She took Wylie a few yards down the street, and showed him a large house with most of the windows broken. "There," said she, "there's a sight for a seafaring man. That's in Chanecery."

"Well, it's better to be there than in H—," said Wylie, meaning to be sharper.

"Wait till you've tried 'em both," said Nancy. Then she took him to the back of the house, and showed him a large garden attached to it.

"Now, Joseph," said she, "I've showed you a lodging-house and a drying-ground; and I'm a cook, and a clear-starcher, and I'm wild to keep lodgers and do for 'em, washing and all. Then, if their foul linen goes out, they follows it; the same if they has their meat from the cook-shop. Four hundred pounds a year lies there a waiting for me. I've been at them often to let me them premises: but they says no, we have got no horder from the court to let. Which the court would rather see 'em go to rack an' ruin for nothing than let 'em to an honest woman as would pay the rent punctual, and make her penny out of 'em, and nobody none the worse. And to sell them, the price is two thousand pounds, an if I had it I'd give it this minite: but where are the likes of you and me to get two thousand pounds? But the lawyer he says, 'Miss Rouse, from *you* one thousand down, and the rest on mortgige at £45 the year,' which it is dirt cheap, I say. So now, my man, when that house is mine, I'm yours. I'm putting by for it o' my side. If you means all you say, why not save a bit o' yours? Once I get that house and garden, you needn't go to sea no more: nor you sha'n't. If I am to be bothered with a man, let me know where to put my finger on him at all hours, and not lie shivering and shaking at every window as creeks, and him out at sea. And if you are too proud to drive the linen in a light cart, why, I could pay a man." In short, she told him plainly she would not marry till she was above the world; and the road to above the world was through that great battered house and seedy garden in chancery.

Now it may appear a strange coincidence that Nancy's price to Wylie was three thousand pounds, and Wylie's to Wardlaw was three thousand pounds: but the fact is it was a forced coincidence. Wylie, bargaining with Wardlaw, stood out for three thousand pounds, because that was the price for the house and garden and Nancy.

Now, when Wylie returned to England safe after his crime and his perils, he comforted himself with the reflection that Nancy would have her house and garden, and he should have Nancy.

But young Wardlaw lay on his sick-bed: his father was about to return to the office, and the gold disguised as copper was ordered up to the cellars in Fenchurch Street. There, in all probability, the contents would be examined ere long, the fraud exposed, and other unpleasant consequences might follow over and above the loss of the promised £3000.

Wylie felt very disconsolate, and went down to Nancy Rouse depressed in spirits. To his surprise she received him with more affection than ever, and, reading his face in a moment, told him not to fret.

"It will be so in your way of life," said this homely comforter; "your sort comes home empty-handed one day, and money in both pockets the next. I'm glad to see you home at all, for I've been in care about you. You're very welcome, Joe. If you are come home honest and sober, why, that is the next best thing to coming home rich."

Wylie hung his head and pondered these words; and well he might, for he had not come home either so sober or so honest as he went out, but quite as poor.

However, his elastic spirits soon revived in Nancy's sunshine, and he became more in love with her than ever.

But when, presuming upon her affection, he urged her to marry him and trust to Providence, she laughed in his face.

"Trust to himprovidence, you mean," said she; "no, no, Joseph. If you are unlucky, I must be lucky, before you and me can come together."

Then Wylie resolved to have his £3000 at all risks. He had one great advantage over a landsman who has committed a crime. He could always go to sea and find employment, first in one ship, and then in another. Terra firma was not one of the necessaries of life to him.

He came to Wardlaw's office to feel his way, and talked guardedly to Michael Penfold about the loss of the *Proserpine*. His apparent object was to give information; his real object was to gather it. He learned that old Wardlaw was very much occupied with fitting out a steamer; that the forty chests of copper had actually come up from the Shannon and were under their feet at that moment, and that young Wardlaw was desperately ill and never came to the office. Michael had not at that time learned the true cause of young Wardlaw's illness. Yet Wylie detected that young Wardlaw's continued absence from the office gave Michael singular uneasiness. The old man fidgeted, and washed the air with his hands, and with simple cunning urged Wylie to go and see him about the *Proserpine*, and get him to the office, if it was only for an hour or two. "Tell him we are all at sixes and sevens, Mr. Wylie; all at sixes and sevens."

"Well," said Wylie, affecting a desire to oblige, "give me a line to him; for I've been twice, and could never get in."

Michael wrote an earnest line to say that Wardlaw senior had been hitherto much occupied in fitting out the *Springbok*, but that he was

going into the books next week. What was to be done?

The note was received; but Arthur declined to see the bearer. Then Wylie told the servant it was Joseph Wylie, on a matter of life and death. "Tell him I must stand at the stairfoot and halloo it out, if he won't hear it any other way."

This threat obtained his admission to Arthur Wardlaw. The sailor found him on a sofa, in a darkened room, pale and worn to a shadow.

"Mr. Wardlaw," said Wylie, firmly, "you mustn't think I don't feel for you; but, sir, we are gone too far to stop, you and me. There is two sides to this business; it is £150,000 for you and £3000 for me, or it is—" "What do I care for money now?" groaned Wardlaw. "Let it go to the devil, who tempted me to destroy her I loved better than money, better than all the world."

"Well, but hear me out," said Wylie. "I say it is £150,000 to you and £3000 to me, or else it is twenty years' penal servitude to both on us."

"Penal servitude!" And the words roused the merchant from his lethargy like a shower-bath.

"You know that well enough," said Wylie. "Why, 'twas a hanging matter a few years ago. Come, come, there are no two ways; you must be a man, or we are undone."

Fear prevailed in that timorous breast, which even love of money had failed to rouse. Wardlaw sat up, staring wildly, and asked Wylie what he was to do.

"First, let me ring for a bottle of that old brandy of yours."

The brandy was got. Wylie induced him to drink a wine-glassful neat, and then to sit at the table and examine the sailors' declaration and the logs. "I'm no great scholar," said he. "I warn't a going to lay these before the underwriters till you had overhauled them. There, take another drop now,—'twill do you good,—while I draw up this thundering blind."

Thus encouraged and urged, the broken-hearted schemer languidly compared the seamen's declaration with the logs; and, even in his feeble state of mind and body, made an awkward discovery at once.

"Why, they don't correspond!" said he.

"What don't correspond?"

"Your men's statement and the ship's log. The men speak of one heavy gale after another, in January, and the pumps going; but the log says, 'A puff of wind from the N.E.' And here, again, the entry exposes your exaggeration: one branch of our evidence contradicts the other; this comes of trying to prove too much. You must say the log was lost, went down with the ship."

"How can I?" cried Wylie. "I have told too many I had got it safe at home."

"Why did you say that? What madness!"

"Why were you away from your office at such a time? How can I know every thing and do every thing? I counted on you for the head-work ashore. Can't ye think of any way to square the log to that part of our tale? might paste in a leaf or two, eh?"

"That would be discovered at once. You have committed an irremediable error. What broad

strokes this Hudson makes. He must have written with the stump of a quill."

Wylie received this last observation with a look of contempt for the mind that could put so trivial a question in so great an emergency.

"Are you quite sure poor Hudson is dead?" asked Wardlaw, in a low voice.

"Dead! Don't I tell you I saw him die!" said Wylie, trembling all of a sudden.

He took a glass of brandy, and sent it flying down his throat.

"Leave the paper with me," said Arthur, languidly, "and tell Penfold I'll crawl to the office to-morrow. You can meet me there; I shall see nobody else."

Wylie called next day at the office, and was received by Penfold, who had now learned the cause of Arthur's grief, and ushered the visitor in to him with looks of benevolent concern. Arthur was seated like a lunatic, pale and motionless; on the table before him was a roast fowl and a salad, which he had forgotten to eat. His mind appeared to alternate between love and fraud; for, as soon as he saw Wylie, he gave himself a sort of shake, and handed Wylie the log and the papers.

"Examine them; they agree better with each other now."

Wylie examined the log, and started with surprise and superstitious terror.

"Why, Hiram's ghost has been here at work!" said he. "It is his very handwriting."

"Hush!" said Wardlaw; "not so loud. Will it do?"

"The writing will do first-rate; but any one can see this log has never been to sea."

Inspired by the other's ingenuity, he then, after a moment's reflection, emptied the salt-cellar into a plate, and poured a little water over it. He wetted the leaves of the log with this salt water, and dog's-eared the whole book.

Wardlaw sighed. "See what expedients we are driven to," said he. He then took a little soot from the chimney, and mixed it with salad oil. He applied some of this mixture to the parchment cover, rubbed it off, and by such manipulation gave it a certain mellow look, as if it had been used by working hands.

Wylie was armed with these materials, and furnished with money, to keep his sailors to their tale, in case of their being examined.

Arthur begged, in his present affliction, to be excused from going personally into the matter of the Proserpine; and said that Penfold had the ship's log, and the declaration of the survivors, which the insurers could inspect, previously to their being deposited at Lloyd's.

The whole thing wore an excellent face, and nobody found a peg to hang suspicion on so far.

After this preliminary, and the deposit of the papers, nothing was hurried; the merchant, absorbed in his grief, seemed to be forgetting to ask for his money. Wylie remonstrated; but Arthur convinced him they were still on too ticklish ground to show any hurry without exciting suspicion.

And so passed two weary months, during which Wylie fell out of Nancy Rouse's good graces, for idling about doing nothing.

"Be you a waiting for the plum to fall into your mouth, young man?" said she.

The demand was made on the underwriters,

and Arthur contrived that it should come from his father. The firm was of excellent repute, and had paid hundreds of insurances, without a loss to the underwriters. The *Proserpine* had foundered at sea; several lives had been lost, and of the survivors one had since died, owing to the hardships he had endured. All this betokened a genuine calamity. Nevertheless, one ray of suspicion rested on the case, at first. The captain of the *Proserpine* had lost a great many ships; and, on the first announcement, one or two were resolved to sift the matter on that ground alone. But when five eye-witnesses, suppressing all mention of the word "drink," declared that Captain Hudson had refused to leave the vessel, and described his going down with the ship, from an obstinate and too exalted sense of duty, every chink was closed; and, to cut the matter short, the insurance money was paid to the last shilling, and Benson, one of the small underwriters, ruined. Nancy Rouse, who worked for Mrs. Benson, lost eighteen shillings and sixpence, and was dreadfully put out about it.

Wylie heard her lamentations, and grinned; for now his £3000 was as good as in his pocket, he thought. Great was his consternation when Arthur told him that every shilling of the money was forestalled, and that the entire profit of the transaction was yet to come, viz., by the sale of the gold-dust.

"Then sell it," said Wylie.

"I dare not. The affair must cool down before I can appear as a seller of gold; and even then I must dribble it out with great caution. Thank Heaven, it is no longer in those cellars."

"Where is it, then?"

"That is my secret. You will get your two thousand all in good time; and, if it makes you one tenth part as wretched as it has made me, you will thank me for all these delays."

At last Wylie lost all patience, and began to show his teeth; and then Arthur Wardlaw paid him his three thousand pounds in forty crisp notes. He crammed them into a side pocket, and went down triumphant to Nancy Rouse. Through her parlor window he saw the benign countenance of Michael Penfold. He then remembered that Penfold had told him some time before that he was going to lodge with her as soon as the present lodger should go.

This, however, rather interrupted Wylie's design of walking in and chucking the three thousand pounds into Nancy's lap. On the contrary, he shoved them deeper down in his pocket, and resolved to see the old gentleman to bed, and then produce his pelf, and fix the wedding-day with Nancy.

He came in and found her crying, and Penfold making weak efforts to console her. The tea-things were on the table, and Nancy's cup half emptied.

Wylie came in, and said, "Why, what is the matter now?"

He said this mighty cheerfully, as one who carried the panacea for all ills in his pocket, and a medicine peculiarly suited to Nancy Rouse's constitution. But he had not quite fathomed her yet.

As soon as ever she saw him she wiped her eyes, and asked him, grimly, what he wanted there. Wylie stared at the reception; but re-

plied stoutly, that it was pretty well known by this time what he wanted in that quarter.

"Well, then," said Nancy, "Want will be your master. Why did you never tell me Miss Helen was in that ship? my sweet, dear mistress as was, that I feel for like a mother. You left her to drown, and saved your own great useless carcass, and drowned she is, poor dear. Get out o' my sight, do."

"It wasn't my fault, Nancy," said Wylie, earnestly. "I didn't know who she was, and I advised her to come with us; but she would go with that parson chap."

"What parson chap? What a liar you be! She is Wardlaw's sweetheart, and don't care for no parsons. If you didn't know you was to blame, why didn't you tell me a word of your own accord? You kep' dark. Do you call yourself a man, to leave my poor young lady to shift for herself?"

"She had as good a chance to live as I had," said Wylie, sullenly.

"No, she hadn't; you took care o' yourself. Well, since you are so fond of yourself, keep yourself to yourself, and don't come here no more. After this, I hate the sight on ye. You are like the black dog in my eyes, and always will be. Poor, dear Miss Helen! Ah, I cried when she left,—my mind misgave me; but little I thought she would perish in the salt seas, and all for want of a man in the ship. If you had gone out again after in the steam-boat,—Mr. Penfold have told me all about it,—I'd believe you weren't so much to blame. But no; lolloping and looking about all day for months. There's my door, Joe Wylie; I can't cry comfortable before you as had a hand in drowning of her. You and me is parted forever. I'll die as I am, or I'll marry a *man*; which you ain't one, nor nothing like one. Is he waiting for you to hold the door open, Mr. Penfold? or don't I speak plain enough? Them as I gave the sack to afore you didn't want so much telling."

"Well, I'm going," said Wylie, sullenly; then, with considerable feeling, "this is hard lines."

But Nancy was inexorable, and turned him out, with the £3000 in his pocket.

He took the notes out of his pocket, and flung them furiously down in the dirt.

Then he did what every body does under similar circumstances, he picked them up again, and pocketed them, along with the other dirt they had gathered.

Next day he went down to the docks, and looked out for a ship; he soon got one, and signed as second mate. She was to sail in a fortnight.

But, before a week was out, the bank-notes had told so upon him, that he was no longer game to go to sea. But the captain he had signed with was a Tartar, and not to be trifled with. He consulted a knowing friend, and that friend advised him to disguise himself till the ship had sailed. Accordingly he rigged himself out with a long coat, and a beard, and spectacles, and hid his sea-slouch as well as he could, and changed his lodgings. Finding he succeeded so well, he thought he might as well have the pleasure of looking at Nancy Rouse, if he could not talk to her. So he actually had the hardihood to take the parlor next door; and by

this means he heard her move about in her room, and caught a sight of her at work on her little green; and he was shrewd enough to observe she did not sing and whistle as she used to do. The dog chuckled at that.

His bank-notes worried him night and day. He was afraid to put them in a bank; afraid to take them about with him into his haunts; afraid to leave them at home; and out of this his perplexity arose some incidents worth relating in their proper order.

Arthur Wardlaw returned to business; but he was a changed man. All zest in the thing was gone. His fraud set him above the world; and that was now enough for him in whom ambition was dead, and, indeed, nothing left alive in him but deep regrets.

He drew in the horns of speculation, and went on in the old safe routine; and to the restless activity that had jeopardized the firm succeeded a strange torpidity. He wore black for Helen, and sorrowed without hope. He felt he had offended Heaven, and had met his punishment in Helen's death. Wardlaw senior retired to Elm-trees, and seldom saw his son. When they did meet, the old man sometimes whispered hope, but the whisper was faint and unheeded.

One day Wardlaw senior came up express, to communicate to Arthur a letter from General Rolleston, written at Valparaiso. In this letter, General Rolleston deplored his unsuccessful search; but said he was going westward, upon the report of a Dutch whaler, who had seen an island reflected in the sky, while sailing between Juan Fernandez and Norfolk Isle.

Arthur only shook his head with a ghastly smile. "*She* is in heaven," said he, "and I shall never see her again, not here or hereafter."

Wardlaw senior was shocked at this speech; but he made no reply. He pitied his son too much to criticise the expressions into which his bitter grief betrayed him. He was old, and had seen the triumphs of time over all things human, sorrow included. These, however, as yet, had done nothing for Arthur Wardlaw. At the end of six months, his grief was as sombre and as deadly as the first week.

But one day, as this pale figure in deep mourning sat at his table, going listlessly and mechanically through the business of scraping money together for others to enjoy, whose hearts, unlike his, might not be in the grave, his father burst in upon him, with a telegram in his hand, and waved it over his head in triumph. "*She* is found! *she* is found!" he roared: "read that!" and thrust the telegram into his hands.

Those hands trembled, and the languid voice rose into shrieks of astonishment and delight, as Arthur read the words, "We have got her, alive and well: shall be at Charing Cross Hotel 8 P.M."

CHAPTER LIV.

WHILST the boat was going to the Springbok, General Rolleston whispered to Captain Moreland; and what he said may be almost guessed from what occurred on board the steamer soon

afterwards. Helen was carried trembling to the cabin, and the order was given to heave up the anchor, and get under way. A groan of disappointment ran through the ship; Captain Moreland expressed the General's regret to the men, and divided £200 upon the capstan; and the groan ended in a cheer.

As for Helen's condition, that was at first mistaken for ill health. She buried herself for two whole days, in her cabin; and from that place faint moans were heard now and then. The sailors called her the sick lady.

Heaven knows what she went through in that forty-eight hours.

She came upon deck at last in a strange state of mind and body: restless, strung up, absorbed. The rare vigor she had acquired on the island came out now with a vengeance. She walked the deck with briskness, and a pertinacity that awakened admiration in the crew at first, but by-and-by superstitious awe. For, while the untiring feet went briskly to and fro over leagues and leagues of plank every day, the great hazel eyes were turned inward, and the mind, absorbed with one idea, skimmed the men and things about her listlessly.

She had a mission to fulfill, and her whole nature was stringing itself up to do the work.

She walked so many miles a day, partly from excitement, partly with a deliberate resolve to cherish her health and strength; "I may want them both," said she, "to clear Robert Penfold." Thought and high purpose shone through her so, that after a while nobody dared trouble her much with commonplaces. To her father, she was always sweet and filial, but sadly cold compared with what she had always been hitherto. He was taking her body to England, but the heart staid behind upon that island: he saw this, and said it.

"Forgive me," said she, coldly; and that was all her reply.

Sometimes she had violent passions of weeping; and then he would endeavor to console her; but in vain. They ran their course, and were succeeded by the bodily activity and concentration of purpose they had interrupted for a little while.

At last, after a rapid voyage, they drew near the English coast; and then General Rolleston, who had hitherto spared her feelings, and been most indulgent and considerate, felt it was high time to come to an understanding with her as to the course they should both pursue.

"Now Helen," said he, "about the Wardlaws!"

Helen gave a slight shudder. But she said, after a slight hesitation, "Let me know your wishes."

"Oh, mine are, not to be too ungrateful to the father, and not to deceive the son."

"I will not be ungrateful to the father, nor deceive the son," said Helen, firmly.

The General kissed her on the brow, and called her his brave girl. "But," said he, "on the other hand, it must not be published that you have been for eight months on an island alone with a convict. Any thing sooner than that. You know the malice of your own sex; if one woman gets hold of that, you will be an outcast from society."

Helen blushed and trembled. "Nobody need

be told that but Arthur; and I am sure he loves me well enough not to injure me with the world."

"But he would be justified in declining your hand after such a revelation."

"Quite. And I hope he will decline it when he knows I love another, however hopelessly."

"You are going to tell Arthur Wardlaw all that?"

"I am."

"Then all I can say is, you are not like other women."

"I have been brought up by a man."

"If I was Arthur Wardlaw, it would be the last word you should ever speak to me."

"If you were Arthur Wardlaw, I should be on that dear island now."

"Well, suppose his love should be greater than his spirit, and—"

"If he does not go back when he hears of my hopeless love, I don't see how I can. I shall marry him: and try with all my soul to love him. I'll open every door in London to Robert Penfold; except one; my husband's. And that door, while I live, he shall never enter. Oh, my heart; my heart!" She burst out sobbing desperately: and her father laid her head upon his bosom, and sighed deeply, and asked himself how all this would end.

Before they landed, her fortitude seemed to return; and of her own accord she begged her father to telegraph to the Wardlaws.

"Would you not like a day to compose yourself, and prepare for this trying interview?" said he.

"I should: but it is mere weakness. And I must cure myself of my weakness, or I shall never clear Robert Penfold. And then, papa, I think of you. If old Mr. Wardlaw heard you had been a day in town, you might suffer in his good opinion. We shall be in London at seven. Ask them at eight. That will be one hour's respite. God help me, and strengthen poor Arthur to bear the blow I bring him!"

Long before eight o'clock that day, Arthur Wardlaw had passed from a state of sombre misery and remorse to one of joy, exultation, and unmixed happiness. He no longer regretted his crime, nor the loss of the Proserpine: Helen was alive and well, and attributed not her danger, but only her preservation, to the Wardlaws.

Wardlaw senior kept his carriage in town, and precisely at eight o'clock they drove up to the door of the hotel.

They followed the servant with bounding hearts, and rushed into the room where the General and Helen stood ready to receive them. Old Wardlaw went to the General with both hands out, and so the General met him, and between these two it was almost an embrace. Arthur ran to Helen with cries of joy and admiration, and kissed her hands again and again, and shed such genuine tears of joy over them that she trembled all over, and was obliged to sit down. He knelt at her feet and still imprisoned one hand, and mumbled it, while she turned her head away and held her other hand before her face to hide its real expression, which was a mixture of pity and repugnance. But, as her face was hidden, and her eloquent body quivered, and her hand was not withdrawn, it seemed a sweet picture of feminine affection to those who had not the key.

At last she was relieved from a most embarrassing situation by old Wardlaw; he cried out on this monopoly, and Helen instantly darted out of her chair, and went to him and put up her cheek to him, which he kissed; and then she thanked him warmly for his courage in not despairing of her life, and his goodness in sending out a ship for her.

Now, the fact is, she could not feel grateful; but she knew she ought to be grateful, and she was ashamed to show no feeling at all in return for so much; so she was eloquent, and the old gentleman was naturally very much pleased at first; but he caught an expression of pain on Arthur's face, and then he stopped her. "My dear," said he, "you ought to thank Arthur, not me; it is his love for you which was the cause of my zeal. If you owe me any thing, pay it to him, for he deserves it best. He nearly died for you, my sweet girl. No, no, you mustn't hang your head for that neither. What a fool I am to revive old sorrows! Here we are, the happiest four in England." Then he whispered to her, "Be kind to poor Arthur, that is all I ask. His very life depends on you."

Helen obeyed this order, and went slowly back to Arthur; she sat, cold as ice, on the sofa beside him, and he made love to her. She scarcely heard what he said; she was asking herself how she could end this intolerable interview, and escape her father's looks, who knew the real state of her heart.

At last she rose, and went and whispered to him: "My courage has failed me. Have pity on me, and get me away. It is the old man; he kills me."

General Rolleston took the hint, and acted with more tact than one would have given him credit for. He got up and rang the bell for tea: then he said to Helen, "You don't drink tea now, and I see you are excited more than is good for you. You had better go to bed."

"Yes, papa," said Helen.

She took her candle, and, as she passed young Wardlaw, she told him in, a low voice, she would be glad to speak to him alone to-morrow.

"At what hour?" said he, eagerly.

"When you like. At one."

And so she retired, leaving him in ecstasies. This was the first downright assignation she had ever made with him.

They met at one o'clock; he radiant as the sun, and a rose in his button-hole: she sad and sombre, and with her very skin twitching at the thought of the explanation she had to go through.

He began with amorous commonplaces; she stopped him, gravely. "Arthur," said she, "you and I are alone now, and I have a confession to make. Unfortunately, I must cause you pain, —terrible pain. Oh, my heart finches at the wound I am going to give you; but it is my fate either to wound you or to deceive you."

During this preamble, Arthur sat amazed, rather than alarmed. He did not interrupt her, though she paused, and would gladly have been interrupted, since an interruption is an assistance in perplexities.

"Arthur, we suffered great hardships on the boat, and you would have lost me but for one person. He saved my life again and again; I saved his upon the island. My constancy was

subject to trials,—oh, such trials! So great an example of every manly virtue forever before my eyes! My gratitude and my pity eternally pleading! England and you seemed gone forever. Make excuses for me if you can. Arthur—I—I have formed an attachment.”

In making this strange avowal she hung her head and blushed, and the tears ran down her cheeks. But we suspect they ran for *him*, and not for Arthur.

Arthur turned deadly sick at this tremendous blow, dealt with so soft a hand. At last he gasped out, “If you marry him, you will bury me.”

“No, Arthur,” said Helen, gently; “I could not marry him, even if you were to permit me. When you know more, you will see that, of us three unhappy ones, you are the least unhappy. But, since this is so, am I wrong to tell you the truth, and leave you to decide whether our engagement ought to continue? Of course, what I have owned to you releases you.”

“Releases me! but it does not unbind my heart from yours,” cried Arthur, in despair.

Then his hysterical nature came out, and he was so near fainting away that Helen sprinkled water on his temples, and applied eau-de-cologne to his nostrils, and murmured, “Poor, poor Arthur! Oh, was I born only to afflict those I esteem?”

He saw her with the tears of pity in her eyes, and he caught her hand, and said, “You were always the soul of honor; keep faith with me, and I will cure you of that unhappy attachment.”

“What! Do you hold me to my engagement after what I have told you?”

“Cruel Helen! you know I have not the power to hold you.”

“I am not cruel; and you have the power. But oh, think! For your own sake, not mine.”

“I have thought; and, this attachment to a man you can not marry is a mere misfortune—yours as well as mine. Give me your esteem until your love comes back, and let our engagement continue.”

“It was for you to decide,” said Helen coldly, “and you have decided. There is one condition I must ask you to submit to.”

“I submit to it.”

“What, before you hear it?”

“Helen, you don’t know what a year of misery I have endured, ever since the report came of your death. My happiness is cruelly dashed now, but still it is great happiness by comparison. Make your conditions. You are my queen, as well as my love and my life.”

Helen hesitated. It shocked her delicacy to lower the man she had consented to marry.

“Oh, Helen,” said Arthur, “any thing but secrets between you and me. Go on as you have begun, and let me know the worst at once.”

“Can you be very generous, Arthur?—generous to him who has caused you so much pain?”

“I’ll try,” said Arthur, with a groan.

“I would not marry him, unless you gave me up: for I am your betrothed, and you are true to me. I *could* not marry him, even if I were not pledged to you; but it so happens, I can do him one great service without injustice to you; and this service I have vowed to do before I marry. I shall keep that vow, as I keep faith

with you. He has been driven from society by a foul slander; that slander I am to sift and confute. It will be long and difficult; but I shall do it; and you could help me if you chose. But that I will not be so cruel as to ask.”

Arthur bit his lip with jealous rage; but he was naturally cunning, and his cunning showed him there was at present but one road to Helen’s heart. He quelled his torture as well as he could, and resolved to take that road. He reflected a moment, and then he said,—

“If you succeed in that will you marry me next day?”

“I will, upon my honor.”

“Then I will help you.”

“Arthur, think what you say. Women have loved as unselfishly as this; but no man, that ever I heard of.”

“No man ever did love a woman as I love you. Yes, I would rather help you, though with a sore heart, than hold aloof from you. What have we to do together?”

“Did I not tell you?—to clear his character of a foul stigma, and restore him to England, and to the world which he is so fitted to adorn.”

“Yes, yes,” said Arthur; “but who is it? Why do I ask, though? He must be a stranger to me.”

“No stranger at all,” said Helen; “but one who is almost as unjust to you as the world has been to him;” then, fixing her eyes full on him, she said, “Arthur, it is your old friend and tutor, Robert Penfold.”

CHAPTER LV.

ARTHUR WARDLAW was thunderstruck; and for some time sat stupidly staring at her. And to this blank gaze succeeded a look of abject terror, which seemed to her strange and beyond the occasion. But this was not all; for, after glaring at her with scared eyes and ashy cheeks a moment or two, he got up and literally staggered out of the room without a word.

He had been taken by surprise, and, for once, all his arts had failed him.

Helen, whose eyes had never left his face, and had followed his retiring figure, was frightened at the weight of the blow she had struck; and strange thoughts and conjectures filled her mind. Hitherto, she had felt sure Robert Penfold was under a delusion as to Arthur Wardlaw, and that his suspicions were as unjust as they certainly were vague. Yet now, at the name of Robert Penfold, Arthur turned pale, and fled like a guilty thing. This was a coincidence that confirmed her good opinion of Robert Penfold, and gave her ugly thoughts of Arthur. Still, she was one very slow to condemn a friend, and too generous and candid to condemn on suspicion; so she resolved as far as possible to suspend her unfavorable judgment of Arthur, until she should have asked him why this great emotion, and heard his reply.

Moreover, she was no female detective, but a pure creature bent on clearing innocence. The object of her life was, not to discover the faults of Arthur Wardlaw, or any other person, but to clear Robert Penfold of a crime. Yet Arthur’s strange behavior was a great shock to her; for here at the very outset, he had somehow made

her feel she must hope for no assistance from him. She sighed at this check, and asked herself to whom she should apply first for aid. Robert had told her to see his counsel, his solicitor, his father, and Mr. Undercliff, an expert, and to sift the whole matter.

Not knowing exactly where to begin, she thought she would, after all, wait a day or two to give Arthur time to recover himself, and decide calmly whether he would co-operate with her or not.

In this trying interval, she set up a diary—for the first time in her life; for she was no egotist: and she noted down what we have just related, only in a very condensed form, and wrote at the margin: *Mysterious*.

Arthur never came near her for two whole days. This looked grave. On the third day she said to General Rolleston:

"Papa, you will help me in the good cause, will you not?"

He replied that he would do what he could, but feared that would be little.

"Will you take me down to Elm-trees, this morning?"

"With all my heart."

He took her down to Elm-trees. On the way she said: "Papa, you must let me get a word with Mr. Wardlaw alone."

"Oh, certainly. But, of course, you will not say a word to hurt his feelings."

"Oh, papa!"

"Excuse me: but, when a person of your age is absorbed with one idea, she sometimes forgets that other people have any feelings at all."

Helen kissed him meekly, and said that was too true; and she would be upon her guard.

To General Rolleston's surprise, his daughter no sooner saw old Wardlaw than she went—or seemed to go—into high spirits, and was infinitely agreeable.

But at last she got him all to herself, and then she turned suddenly grave, and said:

"Mr. Wardlaw, I want to ask you a question. It is something about Robert Penfold."

Wardlaw shook his head. "That is a painful subject, my dear. But what do you wish to know about that unhappy young man?"

"Can you tell me the name of the counsel who defended him at the trial?"

"No, indeed, I can not."

"But perhaps you can tell me where I could learn that."

"His father is in our office still; no doubt he could tell you."

Now, for obvious reasons, Helen did not like to go to the office; so she asked faintly if there was nobody else who could tell her.

"I suppose the solicitor could."

"But I don't know who was the solicitor," said Helen with a sigh.

"Hum!" said the merchant. "Try the bill-broker. I'll give you his address;" and he wrote it down for her.

Helen did not like to be too importunate, and she could not bear to let Wardlaw senior know she loved any body better than his son; and yet some explanation was necessary: so she told him, as calmly as she could, that her father and herself were both well acquainted with Robert Penfold, and knew many things to his credit.

"I am glad to hear that," said Wardlaw;

"and I can believe it. He bore an excellent character here, till, in an evil hour, a strong temptation came, and he fell."

"What! You think he was guilty?"

"I do. Arthur, I believe, has his doubts still. But he is naturally prejudiced in his friend's favor: and, besides, he was not at the trial; I was."

"Thank you, Mr. Wardlaw," said Helen, coldly; and within five minutes she was on her way home.

"Arthur prejudiced in Robert Penfold's favor!" That puzzled her extremely.

She put down the whole conversation while her memory was fresh. She added this comment: "What darkness I am groping in!"

Next day she went to the bill-broker, and told him Mr. Wardlaw senior had referred her to him for certain information. Wardlaw's name was evidently a passport. Mr. Adams said obsequiously, "Any thing in the world I can do, madam."

"It is about Mr. Robert Penfold. I wish to know the name of the counsel he had at his trial."

"Robert Penfold! What, the forger?"

"He was accused of that crime," said Helen, turning red.

"Accused, madam! He was convicted. I ought to know; for it was my partner he tried the game on. But I was too sharp for him. I had him arrested before he had time to melt the notes; indicted him, and sent him across the herring-pond in spite of his parson's coat, the rascal!"

Helen drew back as if a serpent had stung her.

"It was you who had him transported!" cried she, turning her eyes on him with horror.

"Of course it was me," said Mr. Adams, firing up; "and I did the country good service. I look upon a forger as worse than a murderer. What is the matter? You are ill."

The poor girl was half fainting at the sight of the man who had destroyed her Robert and owned it.

"No, no," she cried hastily; "let me get away—let me get away from here—you cruel, cruel man!"

She tottered to the door, and got to her carriage, she scarcely knew how, without the information she went for.

The bill-broker was no fool; he saw now how the land lay; he followed her down the stairs, and tried to stammer excuses.

"Charing Cross Hotel," said she, faintly, and laid her face against the cushion to avoid the sight of him.

When she got home, she cried bitterly at her feminine weakness and her incapacity; and she entered this pitiable failure in her journal with a severity our male readers will hardly, we think, be disposed to imitate; and she added, by way of comment: "Is this how I carry out my poor Robert's precept: Be obstinate as a man; be supple as a woman?"

That night she consulted her father on this difficulty, so slight to any but an inexperienced girl. He told her there must be a report of the trial in the newspapers, and the report would probably mention the counsel; she had better consult a file.

Then the thing was where to find a file. After one or two failures, the British Museum was

suggested. She went thither, and could not get in to read without certain formalities. While these were being complied with, she was at a stand-still.

That same evening came a line from Arthur Wardlaw:—

“DEAREST HELEN:—I hear from Mr. Adams that you desire to know the name of the counsel who defended Robert Penfold. It was Mr. Tollemache. He has chambers in Lincoln’s Inn.

“Ever devotedly yours,

“ARTHUR WARDLAW.”

Helen was touched with this letter, and put it away indorsed with a few words of gratitude and esteem; and copied it into her diary and remarked: “This is one more warning not to judge hastily. Arthur’s agitation was probably only great emotion at the sudden mention of one whose innocence he believes, and whose sad fate distresses him.” She wrote back and thanked him sweetly, and in terms that encouraged a visit. Next day she went to Mr. Tollemache. A seedy man followed her at a distance. Mr. Tollemache was not at his chambers, nor expected till four o’clock. He was in court. She left her card and wrote on it in pencil that she would call at four.

She went at ten minutes after four. Mr. Tollemache declined through his clerk to see her if she was a client; he could only be approached by her solicitor. She felt inclined to go away and cry; but this time she remembered she was to be obstinate as a man and supple as a woman. She wrote on a card: “I am not a client of Mr. Tollemache, but a lady deeply interested in obtaining some information, which Mr. Tollemache can with perfect propriety give me. I trust to his courtesy as a gentleman not to refuse me a short interview.”

“Admit the lady,” said a sharp little voice.

She was ushered in, and found Mr. Tollemache standing before the fire.

“Now, madam, what can I do for you?”

“Some years ago you defended Mr. Robert Penfold; he was accused of forgery.”

“Oh, was he! I think I remember something about it. A banker’s clerk—wasn’t he?”

“Oh no, sir. A clergyman.”

“A clergyman. I remember it perfectly. He was convicted.”

“Do you think he was guilty, sir?”

“There was a strong case against him.”

“I wish to sift that case.”

“Indeed. And you want to go through the papers.”

“What papers, sir?”

“The brief for the defense.”

“Yes,” said Helen, boldly, “would you trust me with that, sir? Oh, if you knew how deeply I am interested!” The tears were in her lovely eyes.

“The brief has gone back to the solicitor, of course. I dare say he will let you read it upon a proper representation.”

“Thank you, sir. Will you tell me who is the solicitor and where he lives?”

“Oh, I can’t remember who was the solicitor. That is the very first thing you ought to have ascertained. It was no use coming to me.”

“Forgive me for troubling you, sir,” said Helen, with a deep sigh.

“Not at all, madam; I am only sorry I can not be of more service. But do let me advise you to employ your solicitor to make these preliminary inquiries. Happy to consult with him, and re-open the matter should he discover any fresh evidence.” He bowed her out, and sat down to a brief while she was yet in sight.

She turned away heart-sick. The advice she had received was good; but she shrank from baring her heart to her father’s solicitor.

She sat disconsolate awhile, then ordered another cab, and drove to Wardlaw’s office. It was late, and Arthur was gone home; so, indeed, was every body, except one young subordinate, who was putting up the shutters. “Sir,” said she, “can you tell me where old Mr. Penfold lives?”

“Somewhere in the subbubs, miss.”

“Yes, sir; but where?”

“I think it is out Pimlico way.”

“Could you not give me the street? I would beg you to accept a present if you could.”

This sharpened the young gentleman’s wits; he went in, and groped here and there till he found the address, and gave it her: No. 3 Fairfield Cottages, Primrose Lane, Pimlico. She gave him a sovereign, to his infinite surprise and delight, and told the cabman to drive to the hotel.

The next moment the man who had followed her was chatting familiarly with the subordinate, and helping him to put up the shutters.

“I say, Dick,” said the youngster, “Penfolds is up in the market; a duchess was here just now, and gave me a sov. to tell her where he lived. Wait a moment till I spit on it for luck.”

The agent, however, did not wait to witness that interesting ceremony. He went back to his hansom round the corner, and drove at once to Arthur Wardlaw’s house with the information.

Helen noted down Michael Penfold’s address in her diary, and would have gone to him that evening, but she was to dine *tête-à-tête* with her father.

Next day she went down to 3 Fairfield Cottages at half past four. On the way her heart palpitated, for this was a very important interview. Here at least she might hope to find some clue, by following out which she would sooner or later establish Robert’s innocence. But then came a fearful thought: “Why had not his father done this already, if it was possible to do it? His father must love him. His father must have heard his own story, and tested it in every way. Yet his father remained the servant of a firm, the senior partner of which had told her to her face Robert was guilty.”

It was a strange and terrible enigma. Yet she clung to the belief that some new light would come to her from Michael Penfold. Then came bashful fears. “How should she account to Mr. Penfold for the interest she took in his own son, she who was affianced to Mr. Penfold’s employer.” She arrived at 3 Fairfield Cottages with her cheeks burning, and repeating to herself: “Now is the time to be supple as a woman but obstinate as a man.”

She sent the cabman in to inquire for Mr. Penfold; a sharp girl of about thirteen came out to her, and told her Mr. Penfold was not at home.

“Can you tell me when he will be at home?”

“No, miss. He have gone to Scotland. A

telegraphum came from Wardlaw's last night, as he was to go to Scotland first thing this morning; and he went at six o'clock."

"Oh dear! How unfortunate!"

"Who shall I say called, miss?"

"Thank you, I will write. What time did the telegram come?"

"Between five and six last evening, miss."

She returned to the hotel. Fate seemed to be against her. Baffled at the very threshold! At the hotel she found Arthur Wardlaw's card and a beautiful bouquet.

She sat down directly, and wrote to him affectionately, and asked him in the postscript if he could send her a report of the trial. She received a reply directly, that he had inquired in the office, for one of the clerks had reports of it; but this clerk was unfortunately out, and had locked up his desk.

Helen sighed. Her feet seemed to be clogged at every step in this inquiry.

Next morning, however, a large envelope came for her, and a Mr. Hand wrote to her thus:—

"MADAM:—Having been requested by Mr. Arthur Wardlaw to send you my extracts of a trial, the Queen v. Penfold, I herewith forward the same, and would feel obliged by your returning them at your convenience. Your obedient servant,
JAMES HAND."

Helen took the inclosed extracts to her bedroom, and there read them both over many times.

In both these reports the case for the Crown was neat, clear, cogent, straightforward, and supported by evidence. The defense was chiefly argument of counsel to prove the improbability of a clergyman and a man of good character passing a forged note. One of the reports stated that Mr. Arthur Wardlaw, a son of the principal witness, had taken the accusation so much to heart that he was now dangerously ill at Oxford. The other report did not contain this, but, on the other hand, it stated that the prisoner, after conviction, had endeavored to lay the blame on Mr. Arthur Wardlaw, but that the judge had stopped him, and said he could only aggravate his offense by endeavoring to cast a slur upon the Wardlaws, who had both shown a manifest desire to shield him, but were powerless for want of evidence.

In both reports the summing up of the judge was moderate in expression, but leaned against the prisoner on every point, and corrected the sophistical reasoning of his counsel very sensibly. Both reports said an expert was called for the prisoner, whose ingenuity made the court smile, but did not counterbalance the evidence. Helen sat cold as ice with the extracts in her hand.

Not that her sublime faith was shaken, but that poor Robert appeared to have been so calmly and fairly dealt with by every body. Even Mr. Hennessy, the counsel for the Crown, had opened the case with humane regret, and confined himself to facts, and said nobody would be more pleased than he would, if this evidence could be contradicted, or explained in a manner consistent with the prisoner's innocence.

What a stone she had undertaken to roll—up what a hill!

What was to be her next step? Go to the

Museum, which was now open to her, and read more reports? She shrank from that.

"The newspapers are all against him," said she; "and I don't want to be told he is guilty, when I know he is innocent."

She now re-examined the extracts with a view to names, and found the only names mentioned were those of the counsel. The expert's name was not given in either. However, she knew that from Robert. She resolved to speak to Mr. Hennessy first, and try and get at the defendant's solicitor through him.

She found him out by the Law Directory, and called at a few minutes past four.

Hennessy was almost the opposite to Tollemache. He was about the size of a gentleman's wardrobe; and, like most enormous men, good-natured. He received her, saw with his practised eye that she was no common person, and, after a slight hesitation on professional grounds, heard her request. He sent for his note-book, found the case in one moment, re-mastered it in another, and told her the solicitor for the Crown in that case was Freshfield.

"Now," said he, "you want to know who was the defendant's solicitor? Jenkins, a stamped envelope. Write your name and address on that."

While she was doing it, he scratched a line to Mr. Freshfield, asking him to send the required information to the inclosed address.

She thanked Mr. Hennessy with the tears in her eyes.

"I dare not ask you whether you think him guilty," she said.

Hennessy shook his head with an air of good-natured rebuke.

"You must not cross-examine counsel," said he: "but, if it will be any comfort to you, I'll say this much, there was just a shadow of doubt, and Tollemache certainly let a chance slip. If I had defended your friend, I would have insisted on a postponement of the trial until this Arthur Wardlaw" (looking at his note-book) "could be examined, either in court or otherwise, if he was really dying. Is he dead, do you know?"

"No."

"I thought not. Sick witnesses are often at death's door; but I never knew one pass the threshold. Ha! ha! The trial ought to have been postponed till he got well. If a judge refused me a postponement in such a case, I would make him so odious to the jury, that the prisoner would get a verdict in spite of his teeth."

"Then you think he was badly defended?"

"No; that is saying a great deal more than I could justify. But there are counsel who trust too much to their powers of reasoning, and underrate a chink in the evidence *pro* or *con*. Practice, and a few back-falls, cure them of that."

Mr. Hennessy uttered this general observation with a certain change of tone, which showed he thought he had said as much or more than his visitor had any right to expect from him; and she therefore left him, repeating her thanks. She went home, pondering on every word he had said, and entered it all in her journal, with the remark; "How strange! the first doubt of Robert's guilt comes to me from the lawyer who caused him to be found guilty. He calls it the shadow of a doubt."

That very evening, Mr. Freshfield had the courtesy to send her by messenger the name and address of the solicitor who had defended Robert Penfold—Lovejoy and James, Lincoln's Inn Fields. She called on them, and sent in her card. She was kept waiting a long time in the outer office, and felt ashamed, and sick at heart, seated among young clerks. At last she was admitted, and told Mr. Lovejoy she and her father, General Rolleston, were much interested in a late client of his, Mr. Robert Penfold; and would he be kind enough to let her see the brief for the defense?

"Are you a relation of the Penfolds, madam?"

"No, sir," said Helen, blushing.

"Humph!" said Lovejoy.

He touched a hand-bell. A clerk appeared.

"Ask Mr. Upton to come to me."

Mr. Upton, the managing clerk, came in due course, and Mr. Lovejoy asked him:—

"Who instructed us in the *Queen v. Penfold*?"

"It was Mr. Michael Penfold, sir."

Mr. Lovejoy then told Helen that she must just get a line from Mr. Michael Penfold, and then the papers should be submitted to her.

"Yes: but, sir," said Helen, "Mr. Penfold is in Scotland."

"Well, but you can write to him."

"No; I don't know in what part of Scotland he is."

"Then you are not very intimate with him?"

"No, sir; my acquaintance is with Mr. Robert Penfold."

"Have you a line from *him*?"

"I have no *written* authority from him; but will you not take my word that I act by his desire?"

"My dear madam," said the lawyer, "we go by rule. There are certain forms to be observed in these things. I am sure your own good sense will tell you it would be cruel and improper of me to submit those papers without an order from Robert or Michael Penfold. Pray consider this as a delay, not a refusal."

"Yes, sir," said Helen; "but I meet with nothing but delays, and my heart is breaking under them."

The solicitor looked sorry, but would not act irregularly. She went home sighing, and condemned to wait the return of Michael Penfold.

The cab door was opened for her by a seedy man she fancied she had seen before.

Baffled thus, and crippled in every movement she made, however slight, in favor of Robert Penfold, she was seduced on the other hand into all the innocent pleasures of the town. Her adventure had transpired somehow or other, and all General Rolleston's acquaintances hunted him up; and both father and daughter were courted by people of ton as lions. A shipwrecked beauty is not offered to society every day. Even her own sex raved about her, and about the chain of beautiful pearls she had picked up somehow on her desolate island. She always wore them; they linked her to that sacred purpose she seemed to be forgetting. Her father drew her with him into the vortex, hiding from her that he embarked in it principally for her sake, and she went down the current with him out of filial duty. Thus unfathomable difficulties thrust her back

from her up-hill task: and the world, with soft but powerful hand, drew her away to it. Arthur brought her a choice bouquet, or sent her a choice bouquet, every evening, but otherwise did not intrude much upon her; and though she was sure he would assist her, if she asked him, gratitude and delicacy forbade her to call him again to her assistance. She preferred to await the return of Michael Penfold. She had written to him at the office to tell him she had news of his son, and begged him to give her instant notice of his return from Scotland.

Day after day passed, and he did not write to her. She began to chafe, and then to pine. Her father saw, and came to a conclusion that her marriage with Arthur ought to be hastened. He resolved to act quietly but firmly towards that end.

CHAPTER LVI.

UP to this time Helen's sex, and its attributes, had been a great disadvantage to her. She had been stopped on the very threshold of her inquiry by petty difficulties which a man would have soon surmounted. But one fine day the scale gave a little turn, and she made a little discovery, thanks to her sex. Women, whether it is that they are born to be followed, or are accustomed to be followed, seem to have eyes in the backs of their heads, and instinct to divine when somebody is after them. This inexperienced girl, who had missed seeing many things our readers have seen, observed in merely passing her window a seedy man in the courtyard of the hotel. Would you believe it, she instantly recognized the man who had opened her cab-door for her in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Quick as lightning it passed through her mind, "Why do I see the same figure at Lincoln's Inn Fields and at Charing Cross?" At various intervals she passed the window; and twice she saw the man again. She pondered, and determined to try a little experiment. Robert Penfold, it may be remembered, had mentioned an expert as one of the persons she was to see. She had looked for his name in the Directory; but experts were not down in the book. Another fatality! But at last she had found Undercliff, a lithographer, and she fancied that must be the same person. She did not hope to learn much from him; the newspapers said his evidence had caused a smile. She had a distinct object in visiting him, the nature of which will appear. She ordered a cab, and dressed herself. She came down, and entered the cab; but, instead of telling the man where to drive, she gave him a slip of paper, containing the address of the lithographer. "Drive there," said she, a little mysteriously. The cabman winked, suspecting an intrigue, and went off to the place. There she learned Mr. Undercliff had moved to Frith Street, Soho, number not known. She told the cabman to drive slowly up and down the street, but could not find the name. At last she observed some lithographs in a window. She let the cabman go all down the street, then stopped him, and paid him off. She had no sooner done this than she walked very briskly back, and entered the little shop, and inquired for Mr. Undercliff. He was out, and not expected back

for an hour. "I will wait," said Helen; and she sat down with her head upon her white hand. A seedy man passed the window rapidly with a busy air; and, if his eye shot a glance into the shop, it was so slight and careless nobody could suspect he was a spy and had done his work effectually as he flashed by. In that moment the young lady, through the clink of her fingers, which she had opened for that purpose, not only recognized the man, but noticed his face, his hat, his waistcoat, his dirty linen, and the pin in his neck-tie.

"Ah!" said she, and flushed to the brow.

She lifted up her head and became conscious of a formidable old woman, who was standing behind the counter at a side door, eying her with the severest scrutiny. This old woman was tall and thin, and had a fine face, the lower part of which was feminine enough; but the forehead and brows were alarming. Though her hair was silvery, the brows were black and shaggy, and the forehead was divided by a vertical furrow into two temples. Under those shaggy eyebrows shone dark gray eyes, that passed for black with most people; and those eyes were fixed on Helen, reading her. Helen's light hazel eyes returned their gaze. She blushed, and, still looking, said, "Pray, madam, can I see Mr. Undercliff?"

"My son is out for the day, miss," said the old lady, civilly.

"Oh dear! how unfortunate I am!" said Helen, with a sigh.

"He comes back to-night. You can see him to-morrow at ten o'clock. A question of hand-writing?"

"Not exactly," said Helen: "but he was witness in favor of a person I know was innocent."

"But he was found guilty," said the other, with cool keenness.

"Yes, madam: and he has no friend to clear him but me: a poor weak girl, baffled and defeated whichever way I turn." She began to cry.

The old woman looked at her crying with that steady composure which marks her sex on these occasions; and, when she was better, said quietly, "You are not so weak as you think." She added, after a while, "If you wish to retain my son, you had better leave a fee."

"With pleasure, madam. What is the fee?"

"One guinea. Of course, there is a separate charge for any work he may do for you."

"That is but reasonable, madam." And with this she paid the fee, and rose to go.

"Shall I send any one home with you?"

"No, thank you," said Helen. "Why?"

"Because you are followed, and because you are not used to be followed."

"Why, how did you find that out?"

"By your face, when a man passed the window—a shabby-genteel fellow; he was employed by some gentleman, no doubt. Such faces as yours will be followed in London. If you feel uneasy, miss, I will put on my bonnet and see you home."

Helen was surprised at this act of substantial civility from the Gorgon. "Oh, thank you, Mrs. Undercliff," said she. "No, I am not the least afraid. Let them follow me, I am doing nothing that I am ashamed of. Indeed, I am glad I am thought worth the trouble of following. It shows me I am not so thoroughly contemptible.

Good-bye, and many thanks. Ten o'clock to-morrow."

And she walked home without looking once behind her till the hotel was in sight; then she stopped at a shop window, and in a moment her swift eye embraced the whole landscape. But the shabby-genteel man was nowhere in sight.

CHAPTER LVII.

WHEN Joseph Wylie disappeared from the scene, Nancy Rouse made a discovery which very often follows the dismissal of a suitor—that she was considerably more attached to him than she had thought. The house became dull, the subordinate washerwomen languid; their taciturnity irritated and depressed Nancy by turns.

In the midst of this, Michael Penfold discovered that Helen had come back safe. He came into her parlor, beaming with satisfaction, and told her of the good news. It gave her immense delight at first. But, when she had got used to her joy on that score, she began to think she had used Joe Wylie very ill. Now that Helen was saved, she could no longer realize that Wylie was so very much to blame.

She even persuaded herself that his disappearance was the act of a justly offended man; and, as he belonged to a class of whose good sense she had a poor opinion, she was tormented with fears that he would do some desperate act—drown himself, or go to sea; or, worst of all, marry some trollop. She became very anxious and unhappy. Before this misfortune she used to go about singing the first verse of a song, and whistling the next, like any ploughboy; an eccentric performance, but it made the house gay. Now both song and whistle were suspended! and, instead, it was all hard work and hard crying; turn about.

She attached herself to Michael Penfold because he had known trouble, and was sympathetic: and these two opened their hearts to one another, and formed a friendship that was very honest and touching.

The scene of their conversation and mutual consolation was Nancy's parlor; a little mite of a room she had partitioned off from her business. "For," said she, "a lady I'll be—after my work is done—if it is only in a cupboard." The room had a remarkably large fireplace, which had originally warmed the whole floor, but now was used as a ventilator only. The gas would have been stifling without it. As for lighting a fire in it, that was out of the question.

On a certain evening, soon after Mr. Penfold's return from Scotland, the pair sat over their tea, and the conversation fell on the missing sweetheart. Michael had been thinking it over, and was full of encouragement. He said:

"Miss Rouse, something tells me that, if poor Mr. Wylie could only know your heart, he would turn up again directly. What we ought to do is to send somebody to look for him in all the sailors' haunts: some sharp fellow—Dear me, what a knocking they keep up next door!"

"Oh, that is always the way when one wants a quiet chat. Drat the woman! I'll have her indicted."

"No, you won't, Miss Rouse: she is a poor

soul, and has got no business except letting lodgings; she is not like you. But I do hope she will be so kind as not to come quite through the wall!"

"Dear heart!" said Nancy, "go on, and never mind her noise, which it is worse than a horgan-grinder."

"Well, then, if you can't find him that way, I say—Advertise."

"Me!" cried Nancy, turning very red. "Do I look like a woman as would advertise for a man?"

"No, ma'am: quite the reverse. But what I mean is, you might put in something not too plain. For instance; If J. W. will return to N. R., all will be forgotten and forgiven."

"He'd have the upper hand of me for life," said Nancy. "No, no; I won't advertise for the fool. What right had he to run off at the first word? He ought to know my bark is worse than my bite by this time. You can, though."

"Me bite, ma'am?" said the old gentleman.

"Bite? no: advertise, since you're so fond of it. Come, you sit down and write one; and I'll pay for it, for that matter."

Michael sat down, and drew up the following: "If Mr. Joseph Wylie will call on Michael Penfold, at No. 3 E. C., he will hear of something to his advantage."

"To his advantage?" said Nancy, doubtfully. "Why not tell him the truth?"

"Why, that is the truth, ma'am. Isn't it to his advantage to be reconciled to an honest, virtuous, painstaking lady, that honors him with her affection—and me with her friendship? Besides, it is the common form; and there is nothing like sticking to form."

"Mr. Penfold," said Nancy, "any one can see you was born a gentleman; and I am a deal prouder to have you and your washing than I should him as pays you your wages: pale eyes—pale hair—pale eyebrows—I wouldn't trust him to mangle a duster."

"Oh, Miss Rouse! Pray don't disparage my good master to me."

"I can't help it, sir; thought is free, especially in this here compartment. Better speak one's mind than die o' the sulks. So shut your ear when my music jars. But one every other day is enough: if he won't come back for that, why, he must go, and I must look out for another; there's as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. Still, I'll not deny I have a great respect for poor Joe. Oh, Mr. Penfold, what shall I do? Oh, oh, oh!"

"There, there," said Michael, "I'll put this into the *Times* every day."

"You are a good soul, Mr. Penfold. Oh, oh, oh!"

When he had finished the advertisement in a clerky hand, and she had finished her cry, she felt comparatively comfortable, and favored Mr. Penfold with some reflections.

"Dear heart, Mr. Penfold, how you and I do take to one another, to be sure. But so we ought: for we are honest folk, the pair, and has had a hard time. Don't it never strike you rather curious that three thousand pounds was at the bottom of both our troubles, yours and mine? I might have married Joe, and been a happy woman with him; but the devil puts in my head—There you go again hammering! Life ain't worth having next door to that lodging-house.

Drat the woman, if she must peck, why don't she go in the churchyard and peck her own grave; which we shall never be quiet till she *is* there: and these here gimcrack houses, they won't stand no more pecking at than a soap-sud. Ay, that's what hurts me, Mr. Penfold: the Lord had given him and me health and strength and honesty; our betters had wed for love and wrought for money, as the saying is; but I must go again Nature, that cried 'Come couple;' and must bargain for three thousand pounds. So now I've lost the man, and not got the money, nor never shall: and, if I had, I'd burn—Ah—ah—ah—ah—ah!"

This tirade ended in stifled screams of terror, caused by the sudden appearance of a human hand, in a place and in a manner well adapted to shake the stoutest laundress's nerves.

This hand came through the brick-work of the chimney-place, and there remained a moment or two: then slowly retired, and, as it retired, something was heard to fall upon the shavings and tinsel of the fireplace.

Nancy, by a feminine impulse, put her hands before her face, to hide this supernatural hand; and, when she found courage to withdraw them, and glare at the place, there was no aperture whatever in the brick-work; and, consequently, the hand appeared to have traversed the solid material, both coming and going.

"Oh, Mr. Penfold," cried Nancy; "I'm a sinful woman. This comes of talking of the devil arter sunset;" and she sat trembling so that the very floor shook.

Mr. Penfold's nerves were not strong. He and Nancy both huddled together for mutual protection, and their faces had not a vestige of color left in them.

However, after a period of general paralysis, Penfold whispered:—

"I heard it drop something on the shavings."

"Then we shall be all in a blaze o' brimstone," shrieked Nancy, wringing her hands.

And they waited to see.

Then, as no conflagration took place, Mr. Penfold got up, and said he must go and see what it was the hand had dropped.

Nancy, in whom curiosity was beginning to battle with terror, let him go to the fireplace without a word of objection, and then cried out,

"Don't go anigh it, sir; it will do you a mischief; don't touch it whatever. *Take the tongs.*"

He took the tongs, and presently flung into the middle of the room a small oil-skin packet. This, as it lay on the ground, they both eyed like two deer glowering at a piece of red cloth, and ready to leap back over the moon if it should show signs of biting. But oil-skin is not preternatural, nor has tradition connected it, however remotely, with the Enemy of man.

Consequently, a great revulsion took place in Nancy, and she passed from fear to indignation at having been frightened so.

She ran to the fireplace, and, putting her head up the chimney, screamed, "Heave your dirt where you heave your love, ye Brazen!"

While she was objugating her neighbor, whom, with feminine justice, she held responsible for every act done in her house, Penfold undid the packet, and Nancy returned to her seat, with her mind more at ease, to examine the contents.

"Bank-notes!" cried Penfold.

"Ay," said Nancy, incredulously, "they do look like bank-notes, and feel like 'em; but they ain't wrote like them. Bank-notes ain't wrote black like that in the left-hand corner."

Penfold explained.

"Ten-pound notes are not, nor fives; but large notes are. These are all fifties."

"Fifty whas?"

"Fifty pounds."

"What, each of them bits of paper worth fifty pounds?"

"Yes. Let us count them; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18,—Oh Lord!—20. Why, it is two thousand pounds,—just two thousand pounds. It is the very sum that ruined me; it did not belong to me, and its being in the house ruined my poor Robert. And this does not belong to you. Lock all the doors, bar all the windows, and burn them before the police come."

"Wait a bit," said Nancy—"wait a bit."

They sat on each side of the notes; Penfold agitated and terrified, Nancy confounded and perplexed.

CHAPTER LVIII.

PUNCTUALLY at ten o'clock Helen returned to Frith Street, and found Mr. Undercliff behind a sort of counter, employed in tracing; a workman was seated at some little distance from him; both bent on their work.

"Mr. Undercliff?" said Helen.

He rose, and turned towards her politely,—a pale, fair man, with a keen gray eye and a pleasant voice and manner: "I am Edward Undercliff. You come by appointment?"

"Yes, sir."

"A question of handwriting?"

"Not entirely, sir. Do you remember giving witness in favor of a young clergyman, Mr. Robert Penfold, who was accused of forgery?"

"I remember the circumstance, but not the details."

"Oh dear! that is unfortunate," said Helen, with a deep sigh; she often had to sigh now.

"Why, you see," said the expert, "I am called on such a multitude of trials. However, I take notes of the principal ones. What year was it in?"

"In 1864."

Mr. Undercliff went to a set of drawers arranged chronologically, and found his notes directly. "It was a forged bill, madam, indorsed and presented by Penfold. I was called to prove that the bill was not in the handwriting of Penfold. Here is my fac-simile of the Robert Penfold indorsed upon the bill by the prisoner." He handed it her, and she examined it with interest. "And here are fac-similes of genuine writing by John Wardlaw; and here is a copy of the forged note."

He laid it on the table before her. She started, and eyed it with horror. It was a long time before she could speak. At length she said, "And that wicked piece of paper destroyed Robert Penfold."

"Not that piece of paper, but the original; this is a fac-simile, so far as the writing is concerned. It was not necessary in this case to

imitate paper and color. Stay, here is a sheet on which I have lithographed the three styles; that will enable you to follow my comparison. But perhaps that would not interest you." Helen had the tact to say it would. Thus encouraged, the expert showed her that Robert Penfold's writing had nothing in common with the forged note. He added: "I also detected in the forged note habits which were entirely absent from the true writing of John Wardlaw. You will understand there were plenty of undoubted specimens in court to go by."

"Then, oh, sir," said Helen, "Robert Penfold was not guilty."

"Certainly not of writing the forged note. I swore that, and I'll swear it again. But when it came to questions whether he had passed the note, and whether he knew it was forged, that was quite out of my province."

"I can understand that," said Helen; "but you heard the trial; you are very intelligent, sir, you must have formed some opinion as to whether he was guilty or not."

The expert shook his head. "Madam," said he, "mine is a profound and difficult art, which aims at certainties. Very early in my career I found that to master that art I must be single-minded, and not allow my ear to influence my eye. By purposely avoiding all reasoning from external circumstances, I have distanced my competitors in expertise; but I sometimes think I have rather weakened my powers of conjecture through disuse. Now, if my mother had been at the trial, she would give you an opinion of some value on the outside facts. But that is not my line. If you feel sure he was innocent, and want me to aid you, you must get hold of the handwriting of every person who was likely to know old Wardlaw's handwriting, and so might have imitated it; all the clerks in his office, to begin with. Nail the forger; that is your only chance."

"What, sir!" said Helen, with surprise, "if you saw the true handwriting of the person who wrote that forged note, should you recognize it?"

"Why not? It is difficult; but I have done it hundreds of times."

"Oh! Is forgery so common?"

"No; but I am in all the cases; and, besides, I do a great deal in a business that requires the same kind of expertise—anonymous letters. I detect assassins of that kind by the score. A gentleman or lady, down in the country, gets a poisoned arrow by the post, or perhaps a shower of them. They are always in disguised handwriting; those who received them send them up to me, with writings of all the people they suspect. This disguise is generally more or less superficial; five or six unconscious habits remain below it, and often these undisguised habits are the true characteristics of the writer. And I'll tell you something curious, madam; it is quite common for all the suspected people to be innocent; and then I write back, 'Send me the handwriting of the people you suspect the least; and among them I often find the assassin.'

"Oh, Mr. Undercliff," said Helen, "you make my heart sick."

"Oh, it is a vile world, for that matter," said the expert; "and the country no better than the town, for all it looks so sweet with its green fields and purling rills. There they sow anony-

mous letters like barley; the very girls write anonymous letters that make my hair stand on end. Yes, it is a vile world."

"Don't you believe him, miss," said Mrs. Undercliff, appearing suddenly. Then turning to her son, "How can you measure the world? You live in a little one of your own—a world of forgers and anonymous writers; you see so many of these, you fancy they are common as dirt; but they are only common to you because they all come your way."

"Oh, that is it, is it?" said the expert, doubtfully.

"Yes, that is it, Ned," said the old lady, quietly; then after a pause she said, "I want you to do your very best for this young lady."

"I always do," said the artist. "But how can I judge without materials? And she brings me none."

Mrs. Undercliff turned to Helen, and said: "Have you brought him nothing at all, no hand-writings—in your bag?"

Then Helen sighed again. "I have no hand-writing except Mr. Penfold's; but I have two printed reports of the trial."

"Printed reports," said the expert, "they are no use to me. Ah! here is an outline I took of the prisoner during the trial. You can read faces: tell the lady whether he was guilty or not," and he handed the profile to his mother with an ironical look; not that he doubted her proficiency in the rival art of reading faces, but that he doubted the existence of the art.

Mrs. Undercliff took the profile, and, coloring slightly, said to Miss Rolleston: "It is living faces I profess to read: there I can see the movement of the eyes and other things that my son here has not studied." Then she scrutinized the profile. "It is a very handsome face," said she.

The expert chuckled. "There's a woman's judgment," said he. "Handsome! the fellow I got transported for life down at Exeter was an Adonis, and forged wills, bonds, and powers of attorney by the dozen."

"There's something noble about this face," said Mrs. Undercliff, ignoring the interruption, "and yet something simple. I think him more likely to be a cat's-paw than a felon." Having delivered this with a certain modest dignity, she laid the profile on the counter before Helen.

The expert had a wonderful eye and hand; it was a good thing for society he had elected to be gamekeeper instead of poacher, detector of forgery instead of forger. No photograph was ever truer than this outline. Helen started, and bowed her head over the sketch to conceal the strong and various emotions that swelled at sight of the portrait of her martyr. In vain; if the eyes were hidden, the tender bosom heaved, the graceful body quivered, and the tears fell fast upon the counter.

Mrs. Undercliff was womanly enough, though she looked like the late Lord Thurlow in petticoats; and she instantly aided the girl to hide her beating heart from the man, though that man was her son. She distracted his attention. "Give me all your notes, Ned," said she, "and let me see whether I can make something of them; but first perhaps Miss Rolleston will empty her bag on the counter. Go back to your work a moment, for I know you have enough to do."

The expert was secretly glad to be released from a case in which there were no materials; and so Helen escaped unobserved except by one of her own sex. She saw directly what Mrs. Undercliff had done for her, and lifted her sweet eyes, thick with tears, to thank her. Mrs. Undercliff smiled maternally, and next these two ladies did a stroke of business in the twinkling of an eye, and without a word spoken, whereof anon. Helen being once more composed, Mrs. Undercliff took up the prayer-book, and asked her with some curiosity what could be in that.

"Oh," said Helen, "only some writing of Mr. Penfold. Mr. Undercliff does not want to see that; he is already sure Robert Penfold never wrote that wicked thing."

"Yes, but I should like to see some more of his handwriting, for all that," said the expert, looking suddenly up.

"But it is only in pencil."

"Never mind; you need not fear I shall alter my opinion."

Helen colored high. "You are right: and I should disgrace my good cause by withholding any thing from your inspection. There, sir." And she opened the prayer-book, and laid Cooper's dying words before the expert; he glanced over them with an eye like a bird, and compared them with his notes.

"Yes," said he, "that is Robert Penfold's writing; and I say again that hand never wrote the forged note."

"Let me see that," said Mrs. Undercliff.

"Oh yes," said Helen, rather irresolutely; "but you look into the things as well as the writing, and I promised papa—"

"Can't you trust me?" said Mrs. Undercliff, turning suddenly cold and a little suspicious.

"Oh yes, madam; and indeed I have nothing to reproach myself with. But my papa is anxious. However, I am sure you are my friend; and all I ask is that you will never mention to a soul what you read there."

"I promise that," said the elder lady, and instantly bent her black brows upon the writing. And, as she did so, Helen observed her countenance rise, as a face is very apt to do when its owner enters on congenial work.

"You would have made a great mistake to keep this from me," said she, gravely. Then she pondered profoundly; then she turned to her son and said, "Why, Edward, this is the very young lady who was wrecked in the Pacific Ocean, and cast on a desolate island. We have all read about you in the papers, miss; and I felt for you, for one, but, of course, not as I do now I have seen you. You must let me go into this with you."

"Ah, if you would!" said Helen. "Oh, madam, I have gone through tortures already for want of somebody of my own sex to keep me in countenance? Oh, if you could have seen how I have been received, with what cold looks, and sometimes with impertinent stares, before I could even penetrate into the region of those cold looks and petty formalities! Any miserable straw was excuse enough to stop me on my errand of justice and mercy and gratitude."

"Gratitude?"

"Oh yes, madam. The papers have only told you that I was shipwrecked and cast away. They don't tell you that Robert Penfold warned

me the ship was to be destroyed, and I disbelieved and affronted him in return, and he never reproached me, not even by a look. And we were in a boat with the sailors all starved—not hungry: starved—and mad with thirst, and yet in his own agony he hid something for me to eat. All his thought, all his fear, was for me. Such things are not done in those great extremities of the poor, vulgar, suffering body, except by angels in whom the soul rises above the flesh. And he is such an angel. I have had a knife lifted over me to kill me, madam—yes: and again it was he who saved me. I owe my life to him on the island over and over again; and in return I have promised to give him back his honor, that he values far more than life, as all such noble spirits do. Ah, my poor martyr, how feebly I plead your cause! Oh, help me! pray, pray, help me! All is so dark, and I so weak, so weak." Again the loving eyes streamed; and this time not an eye was dry in the little shop.

The expert flung down his tracing with something between a groan and a curse. "Who can do that drudgery," he cried, "whilst the poor young lady—Mother, you take it in hand; find me some material, though it is no bigger than a fly's foot; give me but a clue no thicker than a spider's web, and I'll follow it through the whole labyrinth. But you see I'm impotent; there's no basis for me. It is a case for you. It wants a shrewd, sagacious body that can read facts and faces; and—I won't jest any more, Miss Rolleston, for you are deeply in earnest. Well, then, she really is a woman with a wonderful insight into facts and faces. She has got a way of reading them as I read handwriting; and she must have taken a great fancy to you, for as a rule she never does us the honor to meddle."

"Have you taken a fancy to me, madam?" said Helen, modestly and tenderly, yet half-archly.

"That I have," said the other, "Those eyes of yours went straight into my heart last night, or I should not be here this morning. That is partly owing to my own eyes being so dark, and yours the loveliest hazel. It is twenty years since eyes like yours have gazed into mine. Diamonds are not half so rare, nor a tenth part so lovely, to my fancy." She turned her head away, melted probably by some tender reminiscence. It was only for a moment. She turned round again, and said quietly: "Yes, Ned, I should like to try what I can do; I think you said these are reports of his trial. I'll begin by reading them."

She read them both very slowly and carefully, and her face grew like a judge's, and Helen watched each shade of expression with deep anxiety.

That powerful countenance showed alacrity and hope at first; then doubt and difficulty, and at last dejection. Helen's heart turned cold, and for the first time she began to despair. For now a shrewd person, with a plain prejudice in her favor and Robert's, was staggered by the simple facts of the trial.

CHAPTER LIX.

MRS. UNDERCLIFF, having read the reports, avoided Helen's eye (another bad sign). She turned to Mr. Undercliff, and, probably because

the perusal of the reports had disappointed her, said, almost angrily: "Edward, what did you say to make them laugh at that trial? Both these papers say that 'an expert was called, whose ingenuity made the court smile, but did not counterbalance the evidence.'"

"Why, that is a falsehood on the face of it," said the expert, turning red. "I was called simply and solely to prove Penfold did not write the forged note; I proved it to the judge's satisfaction, and he directed the prisoner to be acquitted on that count. Miss Rolleston, the lawyers often do sneer at experts; but then four experts out of five are rank impostors, a set of theorists, who go by arbitrary rules framed in the closet, and not by large and laborious comparison with indisputable documents. These charlatans are not aware that five thousand cramped and tremulous, but genuine, signatures are written every day by honest men, and so they denounce every cramped or tremulous writing as a forgery. The varieties in a man's writing, caused by his writing with his glove on or off, with a quill or a bad steel pen, drunk or sober, calm or agitated, in full daylight or dusk, etc., etc., all this is a dead letter to them, and they have a bias towards suspicion of forgery; and a banker's clerk, with his mere general impression, is better evidence than they are. But I am an artist of a very different stamp. I never reason *a priori*. I compare; and I have no bias. I never will have. The judges know this, and the pains and labor I take to be right, and they treat me with courtesy. At Penfold's trial the matter was easy; I showed the court he had not written the note, and my evidence crushed the indictment so far. How could they have laughed at my testimony? Why, they acted upon it. Those reports are not worth a straw. What journals were they cut out of?"

"I don't know," said Helen.

"Is there nothing on the upper margin to show?"

"No."

"What, not on either of them?"

"No."

"Show them me, please. This is a respectable paper too; the Daily News."

"Oh, Mr. Undercliff, how can you know that?"

"I don't *know* it; but I think so, because the type and paper are like that journal; the conductors are fond of clean type; so am I. Why, here is another misstatement; the judge never said he aggravated his offense by trying to cast a slur upon the Wardlaws. I'll swear the judge never said a syllable of the kind. What he said was, 'You can speak in arrest of judgment on grounds of law, but you must not impugn the verdict with facts.' That was the only time he spoke to the prisoner at all. These reports are not worth a button."

Helen lifted up her hands and eyes in despair. "Where shall I find the truth?" said she.

"The world is a quicksand."

"My dear young lady," said Mrs. Undercliff, "don't you be discouraged; there must be a correct report in some paper or other."

"I am not so sure of that," said Undercliff.

"I believe the reporters trundle off to the nearest public-house together, and light their pipes with their notes, and settle something or other by memory. Indeed they have reached a pitch

of inaccuracy that could not be attained without co-operation. Independent liars contradict each other: but these chaps follow one another in falsehood, like geese toddling after one another across a common."

"Come, come," said Mrs. Undercliff, "if you can't help us, don't hurt us. We don't want a man to talk yellow jaundice to us. Miss Rolleston must employ somebody to read all the other papers, and compare the reports with these."

"I'll employ nobody but myself," said Helen. "I'll go to the British Museum directly."

"The Museum!" cried Mr. Undercliff, looking with surprise. "Why, they will be half an hour groping for a copy of the Times. No, no; go to Peele's Coffee-house." He directed her where to find that place; and she was so eager to do something for Robert, however small, that she took up her bag directly, and put up the prayer-book, and was going to ask for her extracts, when she observed Mr. Undercliff was scrutinizing them with great interest, so she thought she would leave them with him; but, on looking more closely, she found that he was examining, not the reports, but the advertisements and miscellanea on the reverse side.

She waited out of politeness, but she colored and bit her lip. She could not help feeling hurt and indignant. "Any trash is more interesting to people than poor Robert's case," she thought. And at last she said bitterly:—

"Those advertisements seem to interest you, sir; shall I leave them with you?"

"If you please," said the expert, over whose head, bent in dogged scrutiny, this small thunderbolt of feminine wrath passed unconscious.

Helen drove away to Peele's Coffee-house.

Mrs. Undercliff pondered over the facts that had been elicited in this conversation; the expert remained absorbed in the advertisements at the back of Helen's reports.

When he had examined every one of them minutely, he held the entire extracts up to the light, and looked through them; then he stuck a double magnifier in his eye, and looked through them with that. Then he took two pieces of card, wrote on them *Re Penfold*, and looked about for his other materials, to put them all neatly together. Lo! the profile of Robert Penfold was gone.

"Now that is too bad, said he. "So much for her dovelike eyes, that you admired so. Miss Innocence has stolen that profile."

"Stolen! she bought it—of me."

"Why, she never said a word."

"No; but she looked a look. She asked me, with those sweet imploring eyes, might she have it; and I looked yes: then she glanced towards you, and put down a note. Here it is."

"Why, you beat the telegraph, you two! Ten pounds for that thing! I must make it up to her somehow."

"I wish you could. Poor girl, she is a lady every inch. But she is in love with that Penfold. I'm afraid it is a hopeless case."

"I have seen a plainer. But hopeless it is not. However, you work your way, and I'll work mine."

"But you can't; you have no materials."

"No; but I have found a door that may lead to materials."

Having delivered himself thus mysteriously, he shut himself up in obstinate silence until

Helen Rolleston called again, two days afterwards. She brought a bag full of manuscript this time: to wit, copies in her own handwriting of eight reports, the Queen v. Penfold. She was in good spirits, and told Mrs. Undercliff that all the reports were somewhat more favorable than the two she had left; and she was beginning to tell Mr. Undercliff he was quite right in his recollection, when he interrupted her, and said, "All that is secondary now. Have you any objection to answer me a question?"

She colored; but said, "Oh no. Ask me any thing you like;" then she blushed deeper.

"How did you become possessed of those two reports you left with me the other day?"

At this question, so different from what she feared, Helen cleared up and smiled, and said, "From a Mr. Hand, a clerk in Mr. Wardlaw's office; they were sent me at my request."

The expert seemed pleased at this reply; his brow cleared, and he said: "Then I don't mind telling you that those two reports will bring Penfold's case within my province. To speak plainly, Miss Rolleston, your newspaper extracts—**ARE FORGERIES.**"

CHAPTER LX.

"FORGERIES!" cried Helen, with innocent horror.

"RANK FORGERIES," repeated the expert, coolly.

"Forgeries!" cried Helen. "Why, how can printed things be that?"

"That is what I should like to know," said the old lady.

"Why, what else can you call them?" said the expert. "They are got up to look like extracts from newspapers. But they were printed as they are, and were never in any journal. Shall I tell you how I found that out?"

"If you please, sir," said Helen.

"Well, then, I looked at the reverse side, and I found seven misprints in one slip, and five in the other. That was a great number to creep into printed slips of that length. The trial part did not show a single erratum. 'Hullo!' said I to myself; 'why, one side is printed more carefully than the other.' And that was not natural. The printing of advertisements is looked after quite as sharply as any other part in a journal. Why, the advertisers themselves cry out if they are misprinted!"

"Oh, how shrewd!" cried Helen.

"Child's play," said the expert. "Well, from that blot I went on. I looked at the edges, and they were cut too clean. A gentleman with a pair of scissors can't cut slips out of a paper like this. They were cut in the printer's office. Lastly, on holding them to the light, I found they had not been machined upon the plan now adopted by all newspapers; but worked by hand. In one word—**forgeries!**"

"Oh," said Helen, "to think I should have handled forgeries, and shown them to you for real. Ah! I'm so glad; for now I have committed the same crime as Robert Penfold; I have uttered a forged document. Take me up, and have me put in prison, for I am as guilty as ever he was." Her face shone with rapture at sharing Robert's guilt.

The expert was a little puzzled by sentiments so high-flown and unpractical.

"I think," said he, "you are hardly aware what a valuable discovery this may prove to you. However, the next step is to get me a specimen of the person's handwriting who furnished you with these. The chances are he is the writer of the forged note."

Helen uttered an exclamation that was almost a scream. The inference took her quite by surprise. She looked at Mrs. Undercliff.

"He is right, I think," said the old lady.

"Right or wrong," said the expert, "the next step in the inquiry is to do what I said. But that demands great caution. You must write a short civil note to Mr. Hand, and just ask him some question. Let me see: ask him what newspapers his extracts are from, and whether he has got any more. He will not tell you the truth; but no matter, we shall get hold of his handwriting."

"But, sir," said Helen, "there is no need for that. Mr. Hand sent me a note along with the extracts."

"The deuce he did. All the better. Any words in it that are in the forged note? Is Penfold in it, or Wardlaw?"

Helen reflected a moment, and then said she thought both those names were in it.

"Fetch me that note," said Undercliff, and his eyes sparkled. He was on a hot scent now.

"And let me study the genuine reports, and compare what they say with the forged ones," said Mrs. Undercliff.

"Oh, what friends I have found at last!" cried Helen.

She thanked them both warmly, and hurried home, for it was getting late.

Next day she brought Hand's letter to Mr. Undercliff, and devoured his countenance while he inspected it keenly, and compared it with the forged note.

The comparison was long and careful, but unsatisfactory. Mr. Undercliff could not conscientiously say whether Hand had written the forged note or not. There were *pros* and *cons*.

"We are in deeper water than I thought," said he. "The comparison must be enlarged. You must write as I suggested, and get another note out of Mr. Hand."

"And leave the prayer-book with me," said Mrs. Undercliff.

Helen complied with these instructions, and in due course received a civil line from Mr. Hand, to say that the extracts had been sent him from the country by one of his fellow-clerks, and he had locked them up, lest Mr. Michael Penfold, who was much respected in the office, should see them. He could not say where they came from; perhaps from some provincial paper. If of any value to Miss Rolleston, she was quite at liberty to keep them. He added there was a coffee-house in the city where she could read all the London papers of that date. This letter, which contained a great many more words than the other, was submitted to Undercliff. It puzzled him so that he set to work, and dissected every curve the writer's pen had made; but he could come to no positive conclusion, and he refused to utter his conjectures.

"We are in a deep water," said he.

Finally, he told his mother he was at a standstill for the present.

"But I am not," said Mrs. Undercliff. She added, after a while, "I think there's felony at the bottom of this."

"Smells like it to me," said the expert.

"Then I want you to do something very clever for me."

"What is that?"

"I want you to forge something."

"Come! I say."

"Quite innocent, I assure you."

"Well, but it is a bad habit to commence."

"All depends on the object. This is to take in a forger, that is all."

The expert's eyes sparkled. He had always been sadly discontented with the efforts of forgers, and thought he could do better.

"I'll do it," said he, gayly.

CHAPTER LXI.

GENERAL ROLLESTON and his daughter sat at breakfast in the hotel. General Rolleston was reading the Times, and his eye lighted on something that made him start. He looked towards Helen, and his first impulse was to communicate it to her: but, on second thoughts, he preferred to put a question to her first.

"You have never told the Wardlaws what those sailors said?"

"No, papa. I still think they ought to have been told; but you know you positively forbade me."

"Of course I did. Why afflict the old gentleman with such a tale? A couple of common sailors! who chose to fancy the ship was destroyed."

"Who are better judges of such a thing than sailors?"

"Well, my child, if you think so, I can't help it. All I say is, spare the old gentleman such a report. As for Arthur, to tell you the truth, I have mentioned the matter to him."

"Oh papa! Then why forbid me to tell him? What did he say?"

"He was very much distressed. 'Destroy the ship my Helen was in,' said he: 'if I thought Wylie had done that, I'd kill him with my own hand, though I was hanged for it next minute.' I never saw the young fellow fire up so before. But when he came to think calmly over it a little while, he said: 'I hope this slander will never reach my father's ears; it would grieve him deeply. I only laugh at it.'"

"Laugh at it! and yet talk of killing?"

"Oh, people say they laugh at a thing when they are very angry all the time. However, as you are a good girl, and mind what you are told, I'll read you an advertisement that will make you stare. Here is Joseph Wylie, who, you say, wrecked the Proserpine, actually invited by Michael Penfold to call on him, and hear of something to his advantage."

"Dear me!" said Helen, "how strange! Surely Mr. Penfold can not know the character of that man. Stop a minute! Advertise for him? Then nobody knows where he lives? There, papa: you see he is afraid to go near Arthur Wardlaw; he knows he destroyed the

ship. What a mystery it all is! And so Mr. Penfold is at home, after all; and not to send me a single line. I never met with so much unkindness and discourtesy in all my life."

"Ah, my dear," said the General, "you never defied the world before as you are doing now."

Helen sighed; but, presently recovering her spirit, said she had done without the world on her dear island, and she would not be its slave now.

As she was always as good as her word, she declined an invitation to play the lion, and, dressing herself in plain merino, went down that very evening to Michael Penfold's cottage.

We run thither a little before her, to relate briefly what had taken place there.

Nancy Rouse, as may well be imagined, was not the woman to burn two thousand pounds. She locked the notes up; and after that night became very reserved on that head, so much so that, at last, Mr. Penfold saw it was an interdicted topic, and dropped it in much wonder.

When Nancy came to think of it in daylight, she could not help suspecting Wylie had some hand in it; and it occurred to her that the old gentleman who lodged next door might be an agent of Wylie's, and a spy on her. Wylie must have told him to push the £2000 into her room; but what a strange thing to do! To be sure, he was a sailor, and sailors had been known to make sandwiches of bank-notes and eat them. Still, her good sense revolted against this theory, and she was sore puzzled; for, after all, there was the money, and she had seen it come through the wall. One thing appeared certain, Joe had not forgotten her; he was thinking of her as much as ever, or more than ever; so her spirits rose, she began singing and whistling again, and waited cunningly till Joe should re-appear and explain his conduct. Hostage for his re-appearance she held the £2000. She felt so strong and saucy she was half sorry she had allowed Mr. Penfold to advertise; but, after all, it did not much matter; she could always declare to Joe she had never missed him for her part, and the advertising was a folly of poor Mr. Penfold's.

Matters were in this condition when the little servant came up one evening to Mr. Penfold and said there was a young lady to see him.

"A young lady for me?" said he.

"Which she won't eat you, while I am by," said the sharp little girl. "It is a lady, and the same what come before."

"Perhaps she will oblige me with her name," said Michael, timidly.

"I won't show her up till she do," said this mite of a servant, who had been scolded by Nancy for not extracting that information on Helen's last visit.

"Of course, I must receive her," said Michael, half consulting the mite; it belonged to a sex which promptly assumes the control of such gentle creatures as he was.

"Is Miss Rouse in the way?" said he.

The mite laughed, and said:

"She is only gone down the street. I'll send her in to take care on you."

With this she went off, and in due course led Helen up the stairs. She ran in, and whispered in Michael's ears—

"It is Miss Helen Rolleston."

Thus they announced a lady at No. 3.

Michael stared with wonder at so great a personage visiting him; and the next moment Helen glided into the room, blushing a little, and even panting inaudibly, but all on her guard. She saw before her a rather stately figure, and a face truly venerable, benignant, and beautiful, though deficient in strength. She cast a devouring glance on him as she courtesied to him; and it instantly flashed across her, "But for you there would be no Robert Penfold." There was an unconscious tenderness in her voice as she spoke to him, for she had to open the interview.

"Mr. Penfold, I fear my visit may surprise you, as you did not write to me. But, when you hear what I am come about, I think you will not be displeased with me for coming."

"Displeased, madam! I am highly honored by your visit—a lady who, I understand, is to be married to my worthy employer, Mr. Arthur. Pray be seated, madam."

"Thank you, sir."

Helen began in a low, thrilling voice, to which, however, she gave firmness by a resolute effort of her will.

"I am come to speak to you of one who is very dear to you, and to all who really know him."

"Dear to me? It is my son. The rest are gone. It is Robert."

And he began to tremble.

"Yes, it is Robert," said she, very softly; then turning her eyes away from him, lest his emotion should overcome her, she said—

"He has laid me and my father under deep obligations."

She dragged her father in; for it was essential not to show Mr. Penfold she was in love with Robert.

"Obligations to my Robert? Ah, madam, it is very kind of you to say that, and cheer a desolate father's heart with praise of his lost son! But how could a poor unfortunate man in his position serve a lady like you?"

"He defended me against robbers single-handed."

"Ah," said the old man, glowing with pride, and looking more beautiful than ever, "he was always as brave as a lion."

"That is nothing; he saved my life again, and again, and again."

"God bless him for it! and God bless you for coming and telling me of it! Oh, madam, he was always brave, and gentle, and just, and good; so noble, so unfortunate."

And the old man began to cry.

Helen's bosom heaved, and it cost her a bitter struggle not to throw her arms around the dear old man's neck and cry with him. For she came prepared for a sore trial of her feelings, and she clenched her hands and teeth, and would not give way an inch.

"Tell me how he saved your life, madam."

"He was in the ship, and in the boat, with me."

"Ah, madam," said Michael, "that must have been some other Robert Penfold; not my son. He could not come home. His time was not up, you know."

"It was Robert Penfold, son of Michael Penfold."

"Excuse me a moment," said Michael; and he went to a drawer, and brought her a photograph of Robert. "Was it this Robert Penfold?"

The girl took the photograph, and eyed it, and lowered her head over it.

"Yes," she murmured.

"And he was coming home in the ship with you. Is he mad? More trouble! more trouble!"

"Do not alarm yourself," said Helen; "he will not land in England for years"—here she stifled a sob—"and long ere that we shall have restored him to society."

Michael stared at that, and shook his head.

"Never," said he; "that is impossible."

"Why impossible?"

"They all say he is a felon."

"They all *shall* say that he is a martyr."

"And so he is; but how can that ever be proved?"

"I don't know. But I am sure the truth can always be proved, if people have patience and perseverance."

"My sweet young lady," said Michael, sadly, "you don't know the world."

"I am learning it fast, though. It may take me a few years, perhaps, to make powerful friends, to grope my way amongst forgers, and spies, and wicked, dishonest people of all sorts, but so surely as you sit there I'll clear Robert Penfold before I die."

The good feeble old man gazed on her with admiration and astonishment.

She subdued her flashing eye, and said with a smile: "And you shall help me. Mr. Penfold, let me ask you a question. I called here before; but you were gone to Edinburgh. Then I wrote to you at the office, begging you to let me know the moment you returned. Now, do not think I am angry; but pray tell me why you would not answer my letter."

Michael Penfold was not burdened with *amour propre*, but who has not got a little of it in some corner of his heart? "Miss Rolleston," said he, "I was born a gentleman, and was a man of fortune once, till false friends ruined me. I am in business now, but still a gentleman; and neither as a gentleman nor as a man of business could I leave a lady's letter unanswered. I never did such a thing in all my life. I never got your letter," he said, quite put out; and his wrath was so like a dove's that Helen smiled and said, "But I posted it myself. And my address was in it; yet it was not returned."

"Well madam, it was not delivered, I assure you."

"It was intercepted, then."

He looked at her. She blushed, and said: "Yes, I am getting suspicious, ever since I found I was followed and watched. Excuse me a moment." She went to the window and peered through the curtains. She saw a man walking slowly by; he quickened his pace the moment she opened the curtain.

"Yes," said she, "it was intercepted, and I am watched wherever I go."

Before she could say any more a bustle was heard on the stairs, and in bounced Nancy Rouse, talking as she came. "Excuse me, Mr. Penfold, but I can't wait no longer with my heart a bursting; it is! it is! Oh, my dear, sweet

young lady; the Lord be praised! You really are here alive and well. Kiss you I must and shall; come back from the dead; there—there—there!"

"Nancy! my good, kind Nancy," cried Helen, and returned her embrace warmly.

Then followed a burst of broken explanations; and at last Helen made out that Nancy was the landlady, and had left Lambeth long ago.

"But, dear heart! said she, "Mr. Penfold, I'm properly jealous of you. To think of her coming here to see you, and not me!"

"But I didn't know you were here, Nancy." Then followed a stream of inquiries, and such warm-hearted sympathy with all her dangers and troubles, that Helen was led into revealing the cause of it all.

"Nancy," said she, solemnly, "the ship was willfully cast away; there was a villain on board that made holes in her on purpose, and sunk her."

Nancy lifted up her hands in astonishment. But Mr. Penfold was far more surprised and agitated.

"For Heaven's sake, don't say that!" he cried.

"Why not, sir?" said Helen; "it is the truth; and I have got the testimony of dying men to prove it."

"I am sorry for it. Pray don't let any body know. Why, Wardlaws would lose the insurance of £150,000."

"Arthur Wardlaw knows it: my father told him."

"And he never told me," said Penfold, with growing surprise.

"Goodness me! what a world it is!" cried Nancy. "Why, that was murder, and no less. It is a wonder she wasn't drowned, and another friend into the bargain that I had in that very ship. Oh, I wish I had the villain here that done it, I'd tear his eyes out!"

Here the mite of a servant bounded in, radiant and giggling, gave Nancy a triumphant glance, and popped out again, holding the door open, through which in slouched a seafaring man, drawn by Penfold's advertisement, and decoyed into Nancy's presence by the imp of a girl, who thought to please her mistress.

Nancy, who for some days had secretly expected this visit, merely gave a little squeak; but Helen uttered a violent scream; and, upon that, Wylie recognized her, and literally staggered back a step or two, and these words fell out of his mouth:—

"The sick girl!"

Helen caught them.

"Ay!" cried she; "but she is alive in spite of you: alive to denounce you and to punish you."

She darted forward, and her eyes flashed lightning.

"Look at this man, all of you," she cried. "Look at him well: THIS IS THE WRETCH THAT SCUTTLED THE PROSERPINE!"

CHAPTER LXII.

"OH, MISS HELEN, how can you say that?" cried Nancy, in utter dismay. "I'll lay my life poor Joe never did no such wickedness."

But Helen waved her off without looking at her, and pointed at Wylie.

"Are you blind? Why does he cringe and cower at sight of me? I tell you he scuttled the *Proserpine*, and the great auger he did it with I have seen and handled. Yes, sir, you destroyed a ship, and the lives of many innocent persons, whose blood now cries to Heaven against you; and if I am alive to tell the cruel tale, it is no thanks to you; for you did your best to kill me, and, what is worse, to kill Robert Penfold, this gentleman's son; for he was on board the ship. You are no better than an assassin."

"I am a man that's down," said Wylie, in a low and broken voice, hanging his head. "Don't hit me any more. I didn't mean to take any body's life: I took my chance with the rest, lady, as I'm a man. I have lain in my bed many's the night, crying like a child, with thinking you were dead. And now I am glad you are alive to be revenged on me. Well, you see, it is your turn now; you have lost me my sweetheart, there; she'll never speak to me again, after this. Ah, the poor man gets all the blame! You don't ask who tempted me; and, if I was to tell you, you'd hate me worse than ever; so I'll belay. If I'm a sinner, I'm a sufferer. England's too hot to hold me. I've only to go to sea, and get drowned the quickest way." And with this he vented a deep sigh, and slouched out of the room.

Nancy sank into a seat, and threw her apron over her head, and rocked and sobbed as if her heart would break.

As for Helen Rolleston, she still stood in the middle of the room, burning with excitement.

Then poor old Michael came to her, and said, almost in a whisper,—

"It is a bad business; he is her sweetheart, and she had the highest opinion of him."

This softened Helen in a great measure. She turned and looked at Nancy, and said,—

"Oh dear, what a miserable thing! But I couldn't know that."

After a while, she drew a chair, and sat down by Nancy, and said,

"I won't *punish* him, Nancy."

Nancy burst out sobbing afresh.

"You have punished him," said she, brusquely, "and me too, as never did you no harm. You have driven him out of the country, you have."

At this piece of feminine justice Helen's anger revived. "So, then," said she, "ships are to be destroyed, and ladies and gentlemen murdered, and nobody is to complain, or say an angry word, if the wretch happens to be paying his addresses to you. That makes up for all the crimes in the world. What! can an honest woman like you lose all sense of right and wrong for a man? And such a man!"

"Why, he is as well-made a fellow as ever I saw," sobbed Nancy.

"Oh, is he?" said Helen, ironically,—her views of manly beauty were different, and black eyes a *sine qua non* with her,—"then it is a pity his soul is not made to correspond. I hope by my next visit you will have learned to despise him as you ought. Why, if I loved a man ever so, I'd tear him out of my heart if he committed a crime; ay, though I tore my soul out of my body to do it."

"No, you wouldn't," said Nancy, recovering

some of her natural pugnacity; "for we are all tarred with the same stick, gentle or simple."

"But I assure you I would," cried Helen; "and so ought you."

"Well, miss, you begin," cried Nancy, suddenly firing up through her tears. "If the *Proserpine* was scuttled, which I've your word for it, Miss Helen, and I never knew you tell a lie, why, your sweetheart is more to blame for it than mine."

Helen rose with dignity.

"You are in grief," said she. "I leave you to consider whether you have done well to affront me in your own house." And she was moving to the door with great dignity, when Nancy ran and stopped her.

"Oh, don't leave me so, Miss Helen," she cried; "don't you go to quarrel with me for speaking the truth too plain and rude, as is a plain-spoken body at the best; and in such grief myself I scarce know what to say. But indeed, and in truth, you mustn't go and put it abroad that the ship was scuttled; if you do, you won't hurt Joe Wylie; he'll get a ship and fly the country. Who you'll hurt will be your own husband as is to be—Wardlaws."

"Shall I, Mr. Penfold?" asked Helen, disdainfully.

"Well, madam, certainly it might create some unworthy suspicion."

"Suspicion?" cried Nancy. "Don't you think to throw dust in my eyes. What had poor Joe to gain by destroying that there ship? you know very well he was bribed to do it; and risk his own life. And who bribed him? Who should bribe him, but the man as owned the ship?"

"Miss Rouse," said Mr. Penfold, "I sympathize with your grief, and make great allowance; but I will not sit here and hear my worthy employers blackened with such terrible insinuations. The great house of Wardlaw bribe a sailor to scuttle their own ship, with Miss Rolleston and one hundred and sixty thousand pounds' worth of gold on board! Monstrous! monstrous!"

"Then what did Joe Wylie mean?" replied Nancy. "Says he, 'The poor man gets all the blame. If I was to tell you who tempted me,' says he, 'you'd hate me worse.' Then I say, why should she hate him worse? Because it's her sweetheart tempted mine. I stands to that."

This inference, thus worded, struck Helen as so droll that she turned her head aside to giggle a little. But old Penfold replied loftily—

"Who cares what a *Wylie* says against a great old mercantile house of London City?"

"Very well, Mr. Penfolds," said Nancy, with one great final sob, and dried her eyes with her apron; and she did it with such an air, they both saw she was not going to shed another tear about the matter. "Very well; you are both against me; then I'll say no more. But I know what I know."

"And what do you know?" inquired Helen.

"Time will show," said Nancy, turning suddenly very dogged—"time will show."

Nothing more was to be got out of her after that; and Helen, soon after, made her a civil, though stiff, little speech; regretted the pain she had inadvertently caused her, and went away, leaving Mr. Penfold her address.

On her return home, she entered the whole adventure in her diary. She made a separate entry to this effect:

Mysterious.—My letter to Mr. Penfold at the office intercepted.

Wylie hints that he was bribed by Messrs. Wardlaw.

Nancy Rouse suspects that it was Arthur, and says time will show.

As for me, I can neither see why Wylie should scuttle the ship unless he was bribed by somebody, nor what Arthur or his father could gain by destroying that ship. This is all as dark as is that more cruel mystery which alone I care to solve.

CHAPTER LXIII.

NEXT morning, after a sleepless night, Nancy Rouse said to Mr. Penfold, "Haven't I heard you say as bank-notes could be traced to folk?"

"Certainly, madam," said Michael: "but it is necessary to take the numbers of them."

"Oh! And how do you do that?"

"Why, every note has its own number."

"La! ye don't say so; then them fifties are all numbered, belike."

"Certainly, and if you wish me to take down the numbers, I will do so."

"Well, sir, some other day you shall. I could not bear the sight of them just yet; for it is them as has been the ruin of poor Joe Wylie, I do think."

Michael could not follow this; but, the question having been raised, he advised her, on grounds of common prudence, not to keep them in the house without taking down their numbers.

"We will talk about that in the evening," said Nancy.

Accordingly, at night, Nancy produced the notes, and Michael took down the numbers and descriptions in his pocket-book. They ran from 16,444 to 16,463. And he promised her to try and ascertain through what hands they had passed. He said he had a friend in the Bank of England, who might perhaps be able to discover to what private bank they had been issued in the first instance, and then those bankers, on a strong representation, might perhaps examine their books, and say to whom they had paid them. He told her the notes were quite new, and evidently had not been separated since their first issue.

Nancy caught a glimpse of his meaning, and set herself doggedly to watch until the person who had passed the notes through the chimney should come for them. "He will miss them," said she, "you mark my words."

Thus Helen, though reduced to a stand-still herself, had set an inquiry on foot which was alive and ramifying.

In the course of a few days she received a visit from Mrs. Undercliff. That lady came in, and laid a prayer-book on the table, saying, "I have brought it you back, miss; and I want you to do something for my satisfaction."

"Oh, certainly," said Helen. "What is it?"

"Well, miss, first examine the book and the writing. Is it all right?"

Helen examined it and said it was:

"Indeed," said she, "the binding looks fresher, if any thing."

"You have a good eye," said Mrs. Undercliff.

"Well, what I want you to do is—. Of course Mr. Wardlaw is a good deal about you?"

"Yes."

"Does he go to church with you ever?"

"No."

"But he would, if you were to ask him."

"I have no doubt he would; but why?"

"Manage matters so that he shall go to church with you, and then put the book down for him to see the writing, all in a moment. Watch his face and tell me."

Helen colored up and said: "No; I can't do that. Why, it would be turning God's temple into a trap! Besides—"

"The real reason first, if you please," said this horribly shrewd old woman.

"Well, Mr. Arthur Wardlaw is the gentleman I am going to marry."

"Good Heavens!" cried Mrs. Undercliff, taken utterly aback by this most unexpected turn.

"Why, you never told me that!"

"No," said Helen, blushing. "I did not think it necessary to go into that. Well, of course, it is not in human nature that Mr. Wardlaw should be zealous in my good work, or put himself forward; but he has never refused to lend me any help that was in his power; and it is repugnant to my nature to suspect him of a harm, and to my feelings to lay a trap for him."

"Quite right," said Mrs. Undercliff; "of course I had no idea you were going to marry Mr. Wardlaw. I made sure Mr. Penfold was the man."

Helen blushed higher still, but made no reply.

Mrs. Undercliff turned the conversation directly. "My son has given many hours to Mr. Hand's two letters, and he told me to tell you he is beginning to doubt whether Mr. Hand is a real person, with a real handwriting, at all."

"Oh, Mrs. Undercliff! Why, he wrote me two letters! However, I will ask Mr. Penfold whether Mr. Hand exists or not. When shall I have the pleasure of seeing you again?"

"Whenever you like, my dear young lady; but not upon this business of Penfold and Wardlaw. I have done with it forever; and my advice to you, miss, is not to stir the mud any more." And with these mysterious words the old lady retired, leaving Helen deeply discouraged at her desertion.

However, she noted down the conversation in her diary, and made this comment: People find no pleasure in proving an accused person innocent; the charm is to detect guilt. This day a good, kind friend abandons me because I will not turn aside from my charitable mission to suspect another person as wrongfully as he I love has been suspected.

Mem: To see, or make inquiries about, Mr. Hand.

General Rolleston had taken a furnished house in Hanover Square. He now moved into it, and Helen was compelled to busy herself in household arrangements.

She made the house charming; but unfortunately stood in a draught whilst heated, and caught a chill, which a year ago would very

likely have gone to her lungs and killed her, but now settled on her limbs in violent neuralgic pains, and confined her to her bed for a fortnight.

She suffered severely, but had the consolation of finding she was tenderly beloved. Arthur sent flowers every day, and affectionate notes twice a day. And her father was constantly by her bedside.

At last she came down to the drawing-room, but lay on the sofa well wrapped up, and received only her most intimate friends. The neuralgia had now settled on her right arm and hand, so that she could not write a letter; and she said to herself with a sigh, "Oh, how unfit a girl is to do any thing great! We always fall ill just when health and strength are most needed."

Nevertheless, during this period of illness and inaction, circumstances occurred that gave her joy.

Old Wardlaw had long been exerting himself in influential channels to obtain what he called justice for his friend Rolleston, and had received some very encouraging promises; for the General's services were indisputable; and, while he was stirring the matter, Helen was unconsciously co-operating by her beauty, and the noise her adventure made in society. At last a gentleman whose wife was about the queen promised old Wardlaw one day, that, if a fair opportunity should occur, that lady should tell Helen's adventure, and how the gallant old General, when every body else despaired, had gone out to the Pacific, and found his daughter, and brought her home. This lady was a courtier of ten years' standing, and waited her opportunity; but when it did come, she took it, and she soon found that no great tact or skill was necessary on such an occasion as this. She was listened to with ready sympathy, and the very next day some inquiries were made, the result of which was that the Horse Guards offered Lieutenant-General Rolleston the command of a crack regiment and a full generalship. At the same time, it was intimated to him from another official quarter, that a baronetcy was at his service, if he felt disposed to accept it. The tears came into the stout old warrior's eyes at this sudden sunshine of royal favor, and Helen kissed old Wardlaw of her own accord; and the star of the Wardlaws rose into the ascendant, and for a time Robert Penfold seemed to be quite forgotten.

The very day General Rolleston became Sir Edward, a man and a woman called at the Charing Cross Hotel, and asked for Miss Helen Rolleston.

The answer was, she had left the hotel about ten days.

"Where is she gone, if you please?"

"We don't know."

"Why, hasn't she left her new address?"

"No. The footman came for letters several times."

No information was to be got here, and Mr. Penfold and Nancy Rouse went home greatly disappointed, and puzzled what to do.

At first sight it might appear easy for Mr. Penfold to learn the new address of Miss Rolleston. He had only to ask Arthur Wardlaw. But, to tell the truth, during the last fortnight Nancy Rouse had impressed her views steadily and per-

sistently on his mind, and he had also made a discovery that co-operated with her influence and arguments to undermine his confidence in his employer. What that discovery was we must leave him to relate.

Looking, then, at matters with a less unsuspicious eye than heretofore, he could not help observing that Arthur Wardlaw never put into the office letter-box a single letter for his sweetheart. He must write to her, thought Michael; but I am not to know her address. Suppose, after all, he did intercept that letter.

And now, like other simple, credulous men whose confidence has been shaken, he was literally brimful of suspicions, some of them reasonable, some of them rather absurd.

He had too little art to conceal his change of mind; and so, very soon after his vain attempt to see Helen Rolleston at the inn, he was bundled off to Scotland on business of the office.

Nancy missed him sorely. She felt quite alone in the world. She managed to get through the day—work helped her; but at night she sat disconsolate and bewildered, and she was now beginning to doubt her own theory. For certainly, if all that money had been Joe Wylie's, he would hardly have left the country without it.

Now the second evening after Michael's departure, she was seated in his room, brooding, when suddenly she heard a peculiar knocking next door.

She listened a little while, and then stole softly down stairs to her own little room.

Her suspicions were correct. It was the same sort of knocking that had preceded the phenomenon of the hand and bank-notes. She peeped into the kitchen and whispered, "Jenny—Polly—come here."

A stout washerwoman and the mite of a servant came, wondering.

"Now you stand there," said Nancy, "and do as I bid you. Hold your tongues, now. I know all about it."

The myrmidons stood silent, but with panting bosoms; for the mysterious knocking now concluded, and a brick in the chimney began to move.

It came out, and immediately a hand with a ring on it came through the aperture, and felt about.

The mite stood firm, but the big washerwoman gave signs of agitation that promised to end in a scream.

Nancy put her hand roughly before the woman's mouth. "Hold your tongue, ye great soft—" And, without finishing her sentence, she darted to the chimney and seized the hand with both her own and pulled it with such violence that the wrist followed it through the masonry, and a roar was heard.

"Hold on to my waist, Polly," she cried. "Jenny, take the poker, and that string, and tie his hand to it while we hold on. Quick! quick! Are ye asleep?"

Thus adjured, the mite got the poker against the wall, and tried to tie the wrist to it.

This, however, was not easy, the hand struggled so desperately.

However, pulling is a matter of weight rather than muscle; and the weight of the two women pulling downwards overpowered the violent struggles of the man; and the mite contrived to

tie the poker to the wrist, and repeat the ligatures a dozen times in a figure of eight.

Then the owner of the hand, who had hitherto shown violent strength, taken at a disadvantage, now showed intelligence. Convinced that skill as well as force were against him, he ceased to struggle, and became quiet.

The women contemplated their feat with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

When they had feasted a reasonable time on the imprisoned hand, and two of them, true to their sex, had scrutinized a green stone upon one of the fingers, to see whether it was real or false, Nancy took them by the shoulders, and bundled them good-humoredly out of the room.

She then lowered the gas and came out, and locked the room up, and put the key in her pocket.

"I'll have my supper with you," said she. "Come, Jenny, I'm cook; and you make the kitchen as a body could eat off it, for I expect visitors."

"La, ma'am," said the mite; "he can't get out of the chimbley to visit lus through the street door."

"No, girl," said Nancy. "But he can send a hambassador; so Show her heyes and plague her art, as the play says, for of all the dirty kitchens give me hers. I never was there but once, and my slipper come off for the muck, a sticking to a body like bird-lime."

There was a knock at Nancy's street door; the little servant, full of curiosity, was for running to it on the instant. But Nancy checked her.

"Take your time," said she. "It is only a lodging-house-keeper."

CHAPTER LXIV.

SIR EDWARD ROLLESTON could not but feel his obligations to the Wardlaws, and, when his daughter got better, he spoke warmly on the subject, and asked her to consider seriously whether she had not tried Arthur's affection sufficiently.

"He does not complain to you, I know," said he; "but he feels it very hard that you should punish him for an act of injustice that has already so deeply afflicted him. He says he believes some fool or villain heard him say that two thousand pounds was to be borrowed between them, and went and imposed on Robert Penfold's credulity; meaning, perhaps, to call again after the note had been cashed, and get Arthur's share of the money."

"But why did he not come forward?"

"He declares he did not know when the trial was till a month after; and his father bears him out; says he was actually delirious, and his life in danger. I myself can testify that he was cut down just in this way when he heard the Proserpine was lost, and you on board her. Why not give him credit for the same genuine distress at young Penfold's misfortune? Come, Helen, is it fair to afflict and punish this gentleman for the misfortune of another, whom he never speaks of but with affection and pity? He says that if you would marry him at once, he thinks he should feel strong enough to throw himself into

the case with you, and would spare neither money nor labor to clear Robert Penfold; but, as it is, he says he feels so wretched, and so tortured with jealousy, that he can't co-operate warmly with you, though his conscience reproaches him every day. Poor young man! His is really a very hard case. For you promised him your hand before you ever saw Robert Penfold."

"I did," said Helen; "but I did not say when. Let me have one year to my good work, before I devote my whole life to Arthur."

"Well, it will be a year wasted. Why postpone your marriage for that?"

"I promised."

"Yes, but he chose to fancy young Wardlaw is his enemy. You might relax that, now he tells you he will co-operate with you as your husband. Now, Helen, tell the truth—is it a woman's work? Have you found it so? Will not Arthur do it better than you?"

Helen, weakened already by days of suffering, began to cry, and say, "What shall I do? what shall I do?"

"If you have any doubt, my dear," said Sir Edward, "then think of what I owe these Wardlaws."

And with that he kissed her, and left her in tears; and soon after, sent Arthur himself up to plead his own cause.

It was a fine summer afternoon; the long French easements, looking on the garden of the Square, were open, and the balmy air came in and wooed the beautiful girl's cheek, and just stirred her hair at times.

Arthur Wardlaw came softly in, and gazed at her as she lay; her loveliness filled his heart and soul; he came and knelt by her sofa, and took her hand, and kissed it, and his own eyes glistened with tenderness.

He had one thing in his favor. He loved her.

Her knowledge of this had more than once befriended him, and made her refuse to suspect him of any great ill; it befriended him now. She turned a look of angelic pity on him.

"Poor Arthur!" she said. "You and I are both unhappy."

"But we shall be happy, ere long, I hope," said Arthur.

Helen shook her head.

Then he patted her, and coaxed her, and said he would be her servant, as well as a husband, and no wish of her heart should go ungratified.

"None?" said she, fixing her eyes on him.

"Not one," said he; "upon my honor."

Then he was so soft and persuasive, and alluded so delicately to her plighted faith that she felt like a poor bird caught in a silken net.

"Sir Edward is very good," said he; "he feels for me."

At that moment, a note was sent up.

"Mr. Wardlaw is here, and has asked me when the marriage is to be. I can't tell him; I look like a fool."

Helen sighed deeply and had begun to gather those tears that weaken a woman. She glanced despairingly to and fro: and saw no escape. Then, Heaven knows why or wherefore,—probably with no clear design at all but a woman's weak desire to cause a momentary diversion, to put off the inevitable for five minutes,—she said to Arthur: "Please give me that prayer-book. Thank you. It is right you should know this."

And she put Cooper's deposition, and Welch's, into his hands.

He devoured them, and started up in great indignation. "It is an abominable slander," said he. "We have lost ten thousand pounds by the wreck of that ship, and Wylie's life was saved by a miracle as well as your own. It is a foul slander. I hurl it from me." And he made his words good by whirling the prayer-book out of window.

Helen uttered a scream. "My mother's prayer-book!" she cried.

"Oh! I beg pardon," said he.

"As well you may," said she. "Run and send George after it."

"No, I'll go myself," said he. "Pray forgive me: you don't know what a terrible slander they have desecrated your prayer-book with."

He ran out and was a long time gone. He came back at last, looking terrified.

"I can't find it," said he: "somebody has carried it off. Oh, how unfortunate I am!"

"Not find it!" said Helen. "But it *must* be found."

"Of course it must be found," said Arthur. "A pretty scandal to go into the hands of Heaven knows who. I shall offer twenty guineas reward for it at once. I'll go down to the Times this moment. Was ever any thing so unlucky?"

"Yes, go at once," said Helen; "and I'll send the servants into the Square. I don't want to say any thing unkind, Arthur, but you ought not to have thrown my prayer-book into the public street."

"I know I ought not. I am ashamed of it myself."

"Well let me *see* the advertisement."

"You shall. I have no doubt we shall recover it."

Next morning the Times contained an advertisement offering twenty guineas for a prayer-book lost in Hanover Square, and valuable, not in itself, but as a relic of a deceased parent.

In the afternoon Arthur called to know if any body had brought the prayer-book back.

Helen shook her head sadly, and said "No." He seemed very sorry, and so penitent that Helen said,

"Do not despair. And if it is gone, why, I must remember you have forgiven me something, and I must forgive you."

The footman came in.

"If you please, miss, here is a woman wishes to speak to you; says she has brought a prayer-book."

"Oh, show her up at once," cried Helen.

Arthur turned away his head to hide a cynical smile. He had good reasons for thinking it was not the one he had flung out of the window yesterday. A tall woman came in, wearing a thick veil that concealed her features.

She entered on her business at once.

"You lost a prayer-book in this Square yesterday, madam."

"Yes."

"You offer twenty guineas reward for it."

"Yes."

"Please to look at this one."

Helen examined it, and said with joy it was hers.

Arthur was thunderstruck. He could not believe his senses.

"Let me look at it," said he.

His eyes went at once to the writing. He turned as pale as death, and stood petrified.

The woman took the prayer-book out of his unresisting hand, and said,

"You'll excuse me, sir; but it is a large reward, and gentlefolks sometimes go from their word when the article is found."

Helen, who was delighted at getting back her book, and rather tickled at Arthur having to pay twenty guineas for losing it, burst out laughing, and said,

"Give her the reward, Arthur; I am not going to pay for your misdeeds."

"With all my heart," said Arthur, struggling for composure.

He sat down to draw a check.

"What name shall I put?"

"Hum! Edith Heskett."

"Two t's?"

"No, only one."

"There."

"Thank you, sir."

She put the check into her purse, and brought the prayer-book to Helen.

"Look it up at once," said she, in a voice so low that Arthur heard her murmur, but not the words: and she retired, leaving Helen staring with amazement, and Arthur in a cold perspiration.

CHAPTER LXV.

WHEN the Springbok weighed anchor and left the island, a solitary form was seen on Telegraph Hill.

When she passed eastward, out of sight of that point, a solitary figure was seen on the cliffs.

When her course brought the island dead astern of her, a solitary figure stood on the east bluff of the island, and was the last object seen from the boat as she left those waters forever.

What words can tell the sickening sorrow and utter desolation that possessed that yearning bosom!

When the boat that had carried Helen away was out of sight, he came back with uneven steps to the cave, and looked at all the familiar objects with stony eyes, and scarce recognized them, for the sunshine of her presence was there no more. He wandered to and fro in a heavy stupor, broken every now and then by sharp pangs of agony that almost made him scream. And so the poor bereaved creature wandered about all day. He could not eat, he could not sleep, his misery was more than he could bear. One day of desolation succeeded another. And what men say so hastily was true for once. "His life was a burden." He dragged it about with him he scarce knew how.

He began to hate all the things he had loved whilst she was there. The beautiful cave, all glorious with pearl, that he had made for her, he could not enter it, the sight killed him, and she not there.

He left Paradise Bay altogether at last, and anchored his boat in a nook of Seal Bay. And there he slept in general. But sometimes he

would lie down, wherever he happened to be and sleep as long as he could.

To him to wake was a calamity. And, when he did wake, it was always with a dire sense of reviving misery, and a deep sigh at the dark day he knew awaited him.

His flesh wasted on his bones, and his clothes hung loosely about him. The sorrow of the mind reduced him almost to that miserable condition in which he had landed on the island.

The dog and the seal were faithful to him, and often whimpered; their minds, accustomed to communicate without the aid of speech, found out, Heaven knows how! that he was in grief or in sickness.

These two creatures, perhaps, saved his life or his reason. They came between his bereaved heart and utter solitude.

Thus passed a month of wretchedness unspeakable.

Then his grief took a less sullen form.

He came back to Paradise Bay, and at sight of it burst into a passion of weeping.

These were his first tears, and inaugurated a grief more tender than ever, but less akin to madness and despair.

Now he used to go about and cry her name aloud, passionately, by night and day.

"Oh, Helen! Helen!"

And next his mind changed in one respect, and he clung to every reminiscence of her. Every morning he went round her haunts, and kissed every place where he had seen her put her hand.

Only the cave he could not yet face.

He tried, too. He went to the mouth of it again and again, and looked in; but go into it and face it, empty of her—he could not.

He prayed often.

One night he saw her in a dream.

She bent a look of angelic pity on him, and said but these words, "Live in my cave," then vanished.

Alone on an island in the vast Pacific, who can escape superstition? It fills the air. He took this communication as a command, and the next night he slept in the cave.

But he entered it in the dark, and left it before dawn.

By degrees, however, he plucked up courage and faced it in daylight. But it was a sad trial: he came out crying bitterly after a few minutes.

Still he persevered, because her image had bid him; and at last, one evening, he even lighted the lamp, and sat there looking at the glorious walls and roof his hapless love had made.

Getting stronger by degrees, he searched about, and found little relics of her—a glove, a needle, a great hat she made out of some large leaves. All these he wept over and cherished.

But one day he found at the very back of the cave a relic that made him start as if a viper had stung his loving heart. It was a letter.

He knew it in a moment. It had already caused him many a pang; but now it almost drove him mad. Arthur Wardlaw's letter.

He recoiled from it, and let it lie. He went out of the cave, and cursed his hard fate. But he came back. It was one of those horrible things a man abhors, yet can not keep away from.

He took it up and dashed it down with rage many times; but it all ended in his lighting the lamp at night, and torturing himself with every word of that loving letter.

And she was going home to the writer of that letter, and he was left prisoner on the island. He cursed his generous folly, and writhed in agony at the thought. He raged with jealousy, so that his very grief was blunted for a time.

He felt as if he must go mad.

Then he prayed—prayed fervently. And at last, worn out with such fierce and contending emotions, he fell into a deep sleep, and did not wake till the sun was high in heaven.

He woke; and the first thing he saw was the fatal letter lying at his feet in a narrow stream of sunshine that came peering in.

He eyed it with horror. This was then to haunt him by night and day.

He eyed it and eyed it. Then turned his face from it; but could not help eying it again.

And at last certain words in this letter seemed to him to bear an affinity to another piece of writing that had also caused him a great woe. Memory by its subtle links connected these two enemies of his together. He eyed it still more keenly, and that impression became strengthened. He took the letter and looked at it close, and held it at arm's length, and devoured it; and the effect of this keen examination was very remarkable. It seemed to restore the man to energy and to something like hope. His eyes sparkled, and a triumphant "Ah" burst from his bosom.

He became once more a man of action. He rose, and bathed, and walked rapidly to and fro upon the sands, working himself up to a daring enterprise. He took his saw into the jungle, and cut down a tree of a kind common enough there. It was wonderfully soft, and almost as light as cork. The wood of this was literally useless for any other purpose than that to which Penfold destined it. He cut a great many blocks of this wood, and drilled holes in them, and, having hundreds of yards of good line, attached these quasi corks to the gunwale, so as to make a life-boat. This work took him several days, during which time an event occurred that encouraged him.

One morning he saw about a million birds very busy in the bay, and it proved to be a spermaceti whale come ashore.

He went out to her directly with all his tools, for he wanted oil for his enterprise, and the seal oil was exhausted.

When he got near the whale in his boat, he observed a harpoon sticking in the animal's back. He cut steps with his axe in the slippery carcass, and got up to it as well as he could, extracted it by cutting and pulling, and threw it down into his boat, but not till he had taken the precaution to stick a great piece of blubber on the barbed point. He then sawed and hacked under difficulties, being buffeted and bothered with thousands of birds, so eager for slices, that it was as much as he could do to avoid the making of minced fowl; but, true to his gentle creed, he contrived to get three hundred-weight of blubber without downright killing any of these greedy competitors, though he buffeted some of them, and nearly knocked out what little sense they had. He came ashore with his blubber and har-

poon, and when he came to examine the latter, he found that the name of the owner was cut deeply in the steel—Josh. Fullalove, J. Fernandez. This inscription had a great effect on Robert Penfold's mind. It seemed to bring the island of Juan Fernandez, and humanity in general, nearer to him.

He boiled down the blubber, and put a barrel of oil on board his life-boat. He had a ship's lantern to burn it in. He also pitched her bottom as far as he could get at it, and provisioned her for a long voyage; taking care to lash the water-cask and beef-cask to the fore-thwart and foremast, in case of rough weather.

When he had done all this, it occurred to him suddenly, that, should he ever escape the winds and waves, and get to England, he would then have to encounter difficulties and dangers of another class, and lose the battle by his poverty.

"I play my last stake now," said he. "I will throw no chance away."

He reflected with great bitterness on the misery that want of money had already brought on him; and he vowed to reach England rich, or go to the bottom of the Pacific.

This may seem a strange vow for a man to make on an unknown island; but Robert Penfold had a powerful understanding, sharpened by adversity, and his judgment told him truly that he possessed wealth on this island, both directly and indirectly. In the first place, knowledge is sometimes wealth, and the knowledge of this island was a thing he could sell to the American merchants on the coast of Chili; and, with this view, he put on board his boat specimens of the cassia and other woods, fruit, spices, pitch, guano, pink and red coral, pearl oysters, shells, cochineal, quartz, cotton, etc., etc.

Then he took his chisel, and struck all the larger pearls off the shells that lined Helen's cave. The walls and roof yielded nine enormous pearls, thirty large ones, and a great many of the usual size. He made a pocket inside his waistcoat to hold the pearls safe.

Then he took his spade and dug into the Spanish ship for treasure. But this was terrible work. The sand returned upon the spade and trebled his labor.

The condition to which time and long submersion had reduced this ship and cargo was truly remarkable. Nothing to be seen of the deck but a thin brown streak that mingled with the sand in patches; of the timbers nothing but the uprights, and of those the larger half eaten and dissolved.

He dug five days and found nothing solid.

On the sixth, being now at the bottom of the ship, he struck his spade against something hard and heavy.

On inspection it looked like ore, but of what metal he could not tell; it was as black as a coal. He threw this on one side, and found nothing more; but the next day he turned up a smaller fragment, which he took home and cleaned with lime-juice. It came out bright in places like silver.

This discovery threw light on the other. The piece of black ore weighing about seven pounds, was in reality silver coin, that a century of submersion had reduced to the very appearance it wore before it ever went into the furnace.

He dug with fresh energy on this discovery, but found nothing more in the ship that day.

Then it occurred to him to carry off a few hundred weight of pink coral.

He got some fine specimens; and, while he was at that work, he fell in with a piece that looked very solid at the root and unnaturally heavy. On a nearer examination this proved to be a foreign substance incrustated with coral. It had twined and twisted and curled over the thing in a most unheard-of way. Robert took it home, and by rubbing here and there with lemon-juice, at last satisfied himself that this object was a silver box about the size of an octavo volume.

It had no keyhole, had evidently been soldered up for greater security, and Robert was left to conjecture how it had come there.

He connected it at once with the ship, and felt assured that some attempt had been made to save it. There it had lain by the side of the vessel all these years, but falling clear of the sand, had been embraced by the growing coral, and was now a curiosity if not a treasure.

He would not break the coral but put it on board his life-boat just as it was.

And now he dug no more. He thought he could sell the galleon as well as the island, by sample, and he was impatient to be gone.

He reproached himself, a little unjustly, for allowing a woman to undertake the task of clearing him.

"To what annoyances, and perhaps affronts, have I exposed her," said he. "No, it is a man's business to defend, not to be defended."

To conclude: At high tide one fine afternoon he went on board with Ponto, and, hoisting his foresail only, crossed the bay, ranging along the island till he reached the bluff. He got under this, and, by means of his compass and previous observations, set the boat's head exactly on the line the ducks used to take. Then he set his mainsail too, and stretched boldly out across the great Pacific Ocean.

Time seems to wear out every thing, even bad luck. It ran strong against Robert Penfold for years: but, when it had struck its worst blow and parted him and Helen Rolleston, it relaxed, and a tide of good luck set in, which, unfortunately, the broken-hearted man could not appreciate at the time. However, so it was. He wanted oil; and a whale came ashore. He wanted treasure and the sea gave him a little back of all it had swallowed; and now he wanted fine weather, and the ocean for days and nights was like peach-colored glass, dimpled her and there; and soft westerly airs fanned him along by night and day.

To be sure he was on the true Pacific Ocean, at a period when it is really free from storms. Still, even for that latitude, he had wonderful weather for six days; and on the seventh he fell in with a schooner, the skipper and crew of which looked over the bulwarks at him with wonder and cordiality, and, casting out a rope astern, took him in tow.

The skipper had been eying him with amazement for some hours through his telescope; but he was a man that had seen a great many strange things, and it was also a point of honor with him never to allow that he was astonished or taken by surprise, or greatly moved.

"Wal, stranger," said he, "what craft is that?"

"The Helen."

"Where do you hail from? not that I am curious."

"From an unknown island."

"Do tell. What, another! Is it anyways nigh?"

"Not within seven hundred miles."

"Je—rusalem! Have you sailed all that in a cockle shell?"

"Yes."

"Why, what are ye? the Wandering Jew afloat, or the Ancient Mariner? or only a kinder nautilus?"

"I'm a landsman."

"A landsman! then so is Neptune. What is your name when you are ashore?"

"Robert Penfold. The Reverend Robert Penfold."

"The Reverend— Je—rusalem!"

"May I ask what is your name, sir?"

"Wal, I reckon you may, stranger; I'm Joshua Fullalove from the States, at present located on the island of Juan Fernandez."

"Joshua Fullalove! That is lucky. I've got something that belongs to you."

He looked about and found the harpoon, and handed it up in a mighty straightforward, simple way.

Joshua stared at him incredulously at first, but afterwards with amazement. He handled the harpoon and inquired where Robert had fallen in with it. Robert told him.

"You're an honest man," said Fullalove, "you air. Come aboard." He was then pleased to congratulate himself on his strange luck in having drifted across an honest man in the middle of the ocean. "I've heard," said he "of an old chap as groped about all his life with a lantern, and couldn't find one. Let's liquor."

He had some celestial mixture or other made, including rum, mint, and snow from the Andes, and then began his interrogatories, again disclaiming curiosity at set intervals.

"Whither bound, honest man?"

"The coast of Chili."

"What for?"

"Trade."

"D'ye buy or sell? Not that it is my business."

"I wish to sell."

"What's the merchandise?"

"Knowledge and treasure."

"Fullalove scratched his head. "Hain't ye got a few conundrums to swap for gold dust as well?"

Robert smiled faintly: the first time this six weeks.

"I have to sell the knowledge of an island with rich products; and I have to sell the contents of a Spanish treasure-ship that I found buried in the sand of that island."

The Yankee's eyes glistened.

"Wal," said he, "I do business in islands myself. I've leased this Juan Fernandez. But one of them is enough at a time. I'm monarch of all I survey: but then what I survey is a mix-allaneous bilin' of Irish and Otaheitan, that it's pizen to be monarch of. And now them darned Irish has taken to converting the heathens to superstition and the worship of images, and

breaks their heads if they won't: and the heathens are all smiles and sweetness and immorality. No, islands is no bait to me."

"I never asked you," said Robert. "What I do ask you is to land me at Valparaiso. There I'll find a purchaser, and will pay you handsomely for your kindness."

"That is fair," said Fullalove, dryly. "What will you pay me?"

"I'll show you," said Robert. He took out of his pocket the smaller conglomeration of Spanish coin, and put it into Fullalove's hand. "That," said he, "is silver coin I dug out of the galleon."

Fullalove inspected it keenly, and trembled slightly. Robert then went lightly over the taffrail, and slid down the low rope into his boat. He held up the black mass we have described.

"This is solid silver. I will give it you, and my best thanks, to land me at Valparaiso."

"Heave it aboard," said the Yankee.

Robert steadied himself, and hove it on board. The Yankee caught it, heavy as it was, and subjected it to some chemical test directly.

"Wal," said he, "that is a bargain. I'll land ye at Valparaiso for this. Jack, lay her head S. S. E. and by E."

Having given this order, he leaned over the taffrail and asked for more samples. Robert showed him the fruits, woods, and shells, and the pink coral, and bade him observe that the boat was ballasted with pearl oysters. He threw him up one, and a bunch of pink coral. He then shinned up the rope again, and the interrogatories recommenced. But this time he was questioned closely as to who he was, and how he came on the island? and the questions were so shrewd and penetrating that his fortitude gave way, and he cried out in anguish, "Man, man! do not torture me so. Oh, do not make me talk of my grief and my wrongs! they are more than I can bear."

Fullalove forbore directly, and offered him a cigar. He took it, and it soothed him a little; it was long since he had smoked one. His agitation subsided, and a quiet tear or two rolled down his haggard cheek.

The Yankee saw, and kept silence.

But, when the cigar was nearly smoked out, he said he was afraid Robert would not find a customer for his island, and what a pity Joshua Fullalove was cool on islands just now.

"Oh," said Robert, "I know there are enterprising Americans on the coast who will give me money for what I have to sell."

Fullalove was silent a minute, then he got a piece of wood and a knife, and said, with an air of resignation, "I reckon we'll have to deal."

Need we say that to deal had been his eager desire from the first?

He now began to whittle a peg, and awaited the attack.

"What will you give me, sir?"

"What, money down? And you got nothing to sell but chances. Why, there's an old cuss about that knows where the island is as well as you do."

"Then of course you will treat with him," said Robert sadly.

"Darned if I do," said the Yankee. "You are in trouble, and he is not, nor never will be

till he dies, and then he'll get it hot, I calc'late. He is a thief and stole my harpoon: you are an honest man and brought it back. I reckon I'll deal with you and not with that old cuss; not by a jugful! But it must be on a percentage. You tell me the bearings of that there island, and I'll work it and pay five per cent on the gross."

"Would you mind throwing that piece of wood into the sea, Mr. Fullalove?" said Robert.

"Caen't be done, nohow. I caen't deal with-out whittlin'."

"You mean you can't take an unfair advantage without it. Come, Mr. Fullalove, let us cut this short. I am, as you say, an honest and most unfortunate man. Sir, I was falsely accused of a crime and banished my country. I can prove my innocence now if I can but get home with a great deal of money. So much for me. You are a member of the vainest and most generous nation in the world."

"Wal, now that's kinder honey and vinegar mixed," said Fullalove; "pretty good for a Britisher, though."

"You are a man of that nation which, in all the agonies and unparalleled expenses of civil war, smarting, too, under anonymous taunts from England, did yet send over a large sum to relieve the distresses of certain poor Englishmen who were indirect victims of that same calamity. The act, the time, the misery relieved, the taunts overlooked, prove your nation superior to all others in generosity. At least my reading, which is very large, affords no parallel to it, either in ancient or modern history. Mr. Fullalove, please to recollect that you are a member of that nation, and that I am very unhappy and helpless, and want money to undo cruel wrongs, but have no heart to chaffer much. Take the island and the treasures, and give me half the profits you make. Is not that fair?"

Fullalove wore a rueful countenance.

"Darn the critter," said he, "he'll take skin off my bones if I don't mind. Fust Britisher ever I met as had the sense to see *that*. 'Twas rather handsome, warn't it? Wal, human nature is deep; every man you tackle in business larns ye something. What with picking ye out o' the sea, and you giving me back the harpoon the cuss stole, and your face like a young calf, when you are the 'cutest fox out, and you giving the great United States their due, I'm no more fit to deal than mashed potatoes. Now I caved; it is only for once. Next time don't you try to palaver me. Draw me a map of our island, Britisher, and mark where the Spaniard lies: I tell *you* I know her name, and the year she was lost in: larned that at Lima one day. Kinder startled me, you did, when you showed me the coin out of her. Wal, there's my hand on haelf profits, and, if I'm keen, I'm squar'."

Soon after this he led Robert to his cabin, and Robert drew a large map from his models; and Fullalove, being himself an excellent draughtsman, and provided with proper instruments, aided him to finish it.

Next day they sighted Valparaiso, and hove to outside the port.

All the specimens of insular wealth were put on board the schooner and secreted; for Full-

love's first move was to get a lease of the island from the Chilian government, and it was no part of his plan to trumpet the article he was going to buy.

After a moment's hesitation, he declined to take the seven pounds of silver. He gave as a reason, that, having made a bargain which compelled him to go to Valparaiso at once, he did not feel like charging his partner a fancy price for towing his boat thither. At the same time he hinted that, after all this, the next customer would find him a very difficult Yankee to get the better of.

With this understanding, he gave Robert a draft for £80 on account of profits; and this enabled him to take a passage for England with all his belongings.

He arrived at Southampton very soon after the events last related, and thence went to London, fully alive to the danger of his position.

He had a friend in his long beard, but he dared not rely on that alone. Like a mole, he worked at night.

CHAPTER LXVI.

HELEN asked Arthur Wardlaw why he was so surprised at the prayer-book being brought back. Was it worth twenty pounds to any one except herself?

Arthur looked keenly at her to see whether she intended more than met the ear, and then said that he was surprised at the rapid effect of his advertisement, that was all.

"Now you have got the book," said he, "I do hope you will erase that cruel slander on one whom you mean to honor with your hand."

This proposal made Helen blush, and feel very miserable. Of the obnoxious lines some were written by Robert Penfold, and she had so little of his dear handwriting. "I feel you are right, Arthur," said she; "but you must give me time. Then, they shall meet no eye but mine; and on our wedding-day—of course—all memorials of one—" Tears completed the sentence.

Arthur Wardlaw, raging with jealousy at the absent Penfold, as heretofore Penfold had raged at him, heaved a deep sigh and hurried away, while Helen was locking up the prayer-book in her desk. By this means he retained Helen's pity.

He went home directly, mounted to his bedroom, unlocked a safe, and plunged his hand into it. His hand encountered a book; he drew it out with a shiver, and gazed at it with terror and amazement.

It was the prayer-book he had picked up in the Square and locked up in that safe. Yet that very prayer-book had been restored to Helen before his eyes, and was now locked up in her desk. He sat down with the book in his hand, and a great dread came over him.

Hitherto Candor and Credulity only had been opposed to him, but now Cunning had entered the field against him: a master-hand was co-operating with Helen.

Yet strange to say, she seemed unconscious of that co-operation. Had Robert Penfold found his way home by some strange means? Was he watching over her in secret.

He had the woman he loved watched night and day, but no Robert Penfold was detected.

He puzzled his brain night and day, and at last he conceived a plan of deceit which is common enough in the East, where Lying is one of the fine arts, but was new in this country, we believe, and we hope to Heaven we shall not be the means of importing it.

An old clerk of his father's, now superannuated and pensioned off, had a son upon the stage, in a very mean position. Once a year, however, and of course in the dog-days, he had a kind of benefit at his suburban theatre; that is to say, the manager allowed him to sell tickets, and take half the price of them. He persuaded Arthur to take some, and even to go to the theatre for an hour. The man played a little part, of a pompous sneak with some approach to Nature. He seemed at home.

Arthur found this man out; visited him at his own place. He was very poor, and mingled pomposity with obsequiousness, so that Arthur felt convinced he was to be bought, body and soul, what there was of him.

He sounded him accordingly, and the result was that the man agreed to perform a part for him.

Arthur wrote it, and they rehearsed it together. As to the dialogue, that was so constructed that it could be varied considerably according to the cues, which could be foreseen to a certain extent; but not precisely, since they were to be given by Helen Rolleston, who was not in the secret.

But whilst this plot was fermenting, other events happened, with rather a contrary tendency; and these will be more intelligible if we go back to Nancy Rouse's cottage, where indeed we have kept Joseph Wylie in an uncomfortable position a very long time.

Mrs. James, from next door, was at last admitted into Nancy's kitchen, and her first word was, "I suppose you know what I'm come about, ma'am."

"Which it is to return me the sass-pan you borrowed, no doubt," was Nancy's ingenuous reply.

"No, ma'am. But I'll send my girl in with it, as soon as she have cleaned it, you may depend."

"Thank ye, I shall be glad to see it again."

"You're not afeared I shall steal it, I hope."

"La, bless the woman! don't fly out at a body like that. I can't afford to give away my sass-pan."

"Sass-pans is not in my head."

"Nor in your hand neither."

"I'm come about my lodger; a most respectable gentleman, which he have met with an accident. He did but go to put something away in the chimney, which he is a curious gent, and has travelled a good deal, and learned the foreign customs, when his hand was caught in the brick-work, somehow, and there he is hard and fast."

"Do you know any thing about this?" said Nancy to the mite, severely.

"No," said the mite, with a countenance of polished granite.

"La, bless me!" said Nancy, with a sudden start. "Why is she talking about the thief as you and I caught putting his hand through the

wall into my room, and made him fast again the policeman comes round?"

"Thief!" cried Mrs. James: "no more a thief than I am. Why, sure you wouldn't ever be so cruel! Oh dear! oh dear! spite goes a far length. There, take an' kill me, do, and then you'll be easy in your mind. Ah, little my poor father thought as ever I should come down to letting lodgings, and being maltreated this way! I am—"

"Who is a maltreating of ye? Why, you're dreaming. Have a drop o' gin?"

"With them as takes the police to my lodger? It would choke me!"

"Well, have a drop, and we'll see about it."

"You're very kind, ma'am, I'm sure. Heaven knows I need it! Here's wishing you a good husband; and towards burying all unkindness."

"Which you means drounding of it."

"Ah, you're never at a loss for a word, ma'am, and always in good spirits. But your troubles is to come, I'm a widdy. You will let me see what is the matter with my lodger, ma'am?"

"Why not? We'll go and have a look at him."

Accordingly, the three women and the mite proceeded to the little room; Nancy turned the gas on, and then they inspected the imprisoned hand. Mrs. James screamed with dismay, and Nancy asked her dryly whether she was to blame for seizing a hand which had committed a manifest trespass.

"You have got the rest of his body," said she, "but this here hand belongs to me."

"Lord, ma'am, what could he take out of your chimney, without' twas a handful of soot? Do, pray, let me loose him."

"Not till I have said two words to him."

"But how can you? He isn't here to speak to, only a morsel of him."

"I can go into your house and speak to him."

Mrs. James demurred to that; but Nancy stood firm; Mrs. James yielded. Nancy whispered her myrmidons, and in a few minutes was standing by the prisoner, a reverend person in dark spectacles, and a gray beard, that created commiseration, or would have done so, but that this stroke of ill-fortune had apparently fallen upon a great philosopher. He had contrived to get a seat under him, and was smoking a pipe with admirable *sang froid*.

At sight of Nancy, however, he made a slight motion, as if he would not object to follow his imprisoned hand through the party wall. It was only for a moment; the next, he smoked imperceptibly.

"Well, sir," said Nancy, "I hopes you are comfortable?"

"Thank ye, miss; yes. I'm at a double sheet-anchor."

"Why do you call me miss?"

"I don't know. Because you are so young and pretty."

"That will do. I only wanted to hear the sound of your voice, Joe Wylie." And with the word she snatched his wig off with one hand, and his beard with the other, and revealed his true features to his astonished landlady.

"There, mum," said she, "I wish you joy of your lodger." She tapped the chimney three times with the poker, and, telling Mr. Wylie she had a few words to say to him in private,

retired for the present. Mrs. James sat down and mourned the wickedness of mankind, the loss of her lodger (who would now go bodily next door instead of sending his hand), and the better days she had by iteration brought herself to believe she had seen.

Wylie soon entered Nancy's house, and her first question was, "The £2000, how did you get them?"

"No matter how I got them," said Wylie, sulkily. "What have you done with them?"

"Put them away."

"That is all right. I'm blest if I didn't think they were gone forever."

"I wish they had never come. Ill-gotten money is a curse." Then she taxed him with scuttling the Proserpine, and asked him whether that money had not been the bribe. But Joe was obdurate. "I never split on a friend," said he. "And you have nobody to blame but yourself; you wouldn't splice without £2000. I loved you, and I got it how I could. D'ye think a poor fellow like me can make £2000 in a voyage by hauling in ropes, and tying true-lovers' knots in the foretop?"

Nancy had her answer ready; but this remembrance pricked her own conscience and paved the way to a reconciliation. Nancy had no high-flown notions. She loved money, but it must be got without palpable dishonesty; *per contra*, she was not going to denounce her sweetheart, but then again she would not marry him so long as he differed with her about the meaning of the eighth commandment.

This led to many arguments, some of them warm, some affectionate; and so we leave Mr. Wylie under the slow but salutary influence of love and unpretending probity. He continued to lodge next door. Nancy would only receive him as a visitor.

CHAPTER LXVII.

HELEN had complained to Arthur, of all people, that she was watched and followed; she even asked him whether that was not the act of some enemy. Arthur smiled, and said: "Take my word for it, it is only some foolish admirer of your beauty; he wants to know your habits, in hopes of falling in with you; you had better let me go out with you for the next month or so; that sort of thing will soon die away."

As a necessary consequence of this injudicious revelation, Helen was watched with greater skill and subtlety, and upon a plan well calculated to disarm suspicion; a spy watched the door, and by a signal unintelligible to any but his confederate, whom Helen could not possibly see, set the latter on her track. They kept this game up unobserved for several days, but learned nothing, for Helen was at a stand-still. At last they got caught, and by a truly feminine stroke of observation. A showily dressed man peeped into a shop where Helen was buying gloves.

With one glance of her woman's eye she recognized a large breastpin in the worst possible taste; thence her eye went up and recognized the features of her seedy follower, though he was now dressed up to the nine. She withdrew her

eye directly, completed her purchase, and went home, brooding defense and vengeance.

That evening she dined with a lady who had a large acquaintance with lawyers, and it so happened that Mr. Tollemache and Mr. Hennessy were both of the party. Now, when these gentlemen saw Helen in full costume, a queen in form as well as face, coroneted with her island pearls, environed with a halo of romance, and courted by women as well as men, they looked up to her with astonishment, and made up to her in a very different style from that in which they had received her visit. Tollemache she received coldly; he had defended Robert Penfold feebly, and she hated him for it. Hennessy she received graciously, and, remembering Robert's precept to be supple as a woman, bewitched him. He was good-natured, able, and vain. By eleven o'clock she had enlisted him in her service. When she had conquered him, she said, slyly, "But I ought not to speak of these things to you except through a solicitor."

"That is the general rule," said the learned counsel; "but in this case no dark body must come between me and the sun."

In short, he entered into Penfold's case with such well-feigned warmth, to please the beautiful girl, that at last she took him by the horns and consulted.

"I am followed," said she.

"I have no doubt you are; and on a large scale; if there is room for another, I should be glad to join the train."

"Ha! ha! I'll save you the trouble. I'll meet you half-way. But, to be serious, I am watched, spied, and followed by some enemy to that good friend whose sacred cause we have undertaken. Forgive me for saying 'we.'"

"I am too proud of the companionship to let you off. 'We' is the word."

"Then advise me what to do. I want to retaliate. I want to discover who is watching me, and why. Can you advise me? Will you?"

The counsel reflected a moment, and Helen, who watched him, remarked the power that suddenly came into his countenance and brow.

"You must watch the spies. I have influence in Scotland Yard, and will get it done for you. If you went there yourself, they would cross-examine you and decline to interfere. I'll go myself for you and put it in a certain light. An able detective will call on you: give him ten guineas, and let him into your views in confidence; then he will work the public machinery for you."

"Oh, Mr. Hennessy, how can I thank you?"

"By succeeding. I hate to fail: and now your cause is mine."

Next day a man with a hooked nose, a keen black eye, and a solitary foible (Mosaic), called on Helen Rolleston, and told her he was to take her instructions. She told him she was watched, and thought it was done to baffle a mission she had undertaken; but, having got so far, she blushed and hesitated.

"The more you tell me, miss, the more use I can be," said Mr. Burt.

Thus encouraged, and also remembering Mr. Hennessy's advice, she gave Mr. Burt, as coldly as she could, an outline of Robert Penfold's case, and of the exertions she had made, and the small result.

Burt listened keenly, and took a note or two; and, when she had done, he told her something in return.

"Miss Rolleston," said he, "I am the officer that arrested Robert Penfold. It cost me a grinder that he knocked out."

"Oh, dear!" said Helen, "how unfortunate! Then I fear I can not reckon on your services."

"Why not, miss? What, do you think I hold spite against a poor fellow for defending himself? Besides, Mr. Penfold wrote me a very proper note. Certainly for a parson the gent is a very quick hitter; but he wrote very square; said he hoped I would allow for the surprise and the agitation of an innocent man; sent me two guineas too, and said he would make it twenty but he was poor as well as unfortunate; that letter has stuck in my gizzard ever since; can't see the color of felony in it. Your felon is never in a fault; and, if he wears a good coat, he isn't given to show fight."

"It was very improper of him to strike you," said Helen, "and very noble of you to forgive it. Make him still more ashamed of it; lay him under a deep obligation."

"If he is innocent, I'll try and prove it," said the detective. He then asked her if she had taken notes. She said she had a diary. He begged to see it. She felt inclined to withhold it, because of the comments; but, remembering that this was womanish, and that Robert's orders to her were to be manly on such occasions, she produced her diary. Mr. Burt read it very carefully, and told her it was a very promising case. "You have done a great deal more than you thought," he said. "*You have netted the fish.*"

CHAPTER LXVIII.

"I! NETTED the fish! what fish?"

"The man who forged the promissory note."

"Oh, Mr. Burt!"

"The same man that forged the newspaper extracts to deceive you forged the promissory note years ago, and the man who is setting spies on you is the man who forged those extracts; so we are sure to nail him. He is in the net; and very much to your credit. Leave the rest to me, I'll tell you more about it to-morrow. You must order your carriage at one o'clock to-morrow and drive down to Scotland Yard; go into the yard, and you will see me; follow me without a word. When you go back, the other spies will be so frightened, they will go off to their employer, and so we shall nail him."

Helen complied with these instructions strictly, and then returned home, leaving Mr. Burt to work. She had been home about half an hour, when the servant brought her up a message saying that a man wanted to speak to her. "Admit him," said Helen. "He is dressed very poor, miss." "Never mind; send him to me." She was afraid to reject any body now, lest she might turn her back on information.

A man presented himself in well-worn clothes, with a wash-leather face and close-shaven chin; a little of his forehead was also shaven. "Madam, my name is Hand." Helen started. "I have already had the honor of writing to you."

"Yes, sir," said Helen, eying him with fear and aversion.

"Madam, I am come"—(he hesitated)—"I am an unfortunate man. Weighed down by remorse for a thoughtless act that has ruined an innocent man, and nearly cost my worthy employer his life, I come to expiate as far as in me lies. But let me be brief, and hurry over the tale of shame. I was a clerk at Wardlaw's office. A bill-broker called Adams was talking to me and my fellow-clerks, and boasting that nobody could take him in with a feigned signature. Bets were laid; our vanity was irritated by his pretension. It was my fortune to overhear my young master and his friend Robert Penfold speak about a loan of two thousand pounds. In an evil hour I listened to the tempter, and wrote a forged note for that amount. I took it to Mr. Penfold; he presented it to Adams, and it was cashed. I intended, of course, to call next day, and tell Mr. Penfold, and take him to Adams, and restore the money, and get back the note. It was not due for three months. Alas! that very day it fell under suspicion. Mr. Penfold was arrested. My young master was struck down with illness at his friend's guilt, though he never could be quite got to believe it; and I—miserable coward!—dared not tell the truth. Ever since that day I have been a miserable man. The other day I came into money, and left Wardlaw's service. But I carry my remorse with me. Madam, I am come to tell the truth. I dare not tell it to Mr. Wardlaw; I think he would kill me. But I will tell it to you, and you can tell it to him; ay, tell it to all the world. Let my shame be as public as his whom I have injured so deeply but, Heaven knows, unintentionally. I—I—I—"

Mr. Hand sank all in a heap where he sat, and could say no more.

Helen's flesh crawled at this confession, and at the sight of this reptile who owned that he had destroyed Robert Penfold in fear and cowardice. For a long time her wrath so overpowered all sense of pity, that she sat trembling; and, if eyes could kill, Mr. Hand would not have outlived his confession.

At last she contrived to speak. She turned her head away not to see the wretch, and said, sternly,—

"Are you prepared to make this statement on paper, if called on?"

Mr. Hand hesitated, but said "Yes."

"Then write down that Robert Penfold was innocent, and you are ready to prove it whenever you may be called upon."

"Write that down?" said Hand.

"Unless your penitence is feigned, you will."

"Sooner than that should be added to my crime I will avow all." He wrote the few lines she required.

"Now your address, that I may know where to find you at a moment's notice." He wrote, "J. Hand, 11 Warwick Street, Pimlico."

Helen then dismissed him, and wept bitterly. In that condition she was found by Arthur Wardlaw, who comforted her, and, on hearing her report of Hand's confession, burst out into triumph, and reminded her he had always said Robert Penfold was innocent. "My father," said he, "must yield to this evidence, and we will lay it before the Secretary of State, and get his pardon."

"His pardon! when he is innocent!"

"Oh, that is the form—the only form. The rest must be done by the warm reception of his friends. I, for one, who all these years have maintained his innocence, will be the first to welcome him to my house an honored guest. What am I saying? Can I? dare I? ought I? when my wife— Ah! I am more to be pitied than my poor friend is; my friend, my rival. Well, I leave it to you whether he can come into your husband's house."

"Never."

"But at least, I can send the Springbok out, and bring him home; and that I will do without one day's delay."

"Oh, Arthur!" cried Helen, "you set me an example of unselfishness."

"I do what I can, said Arthur. "I am no saint. I hope for a reward."

Helen sighed. "What shall I do?"

"Have pity on me! your faithful lover, and to whom your faith was pledged before ever you saw or knew my unhappy friend. What can I do or suffer more than I have done and suffered for you? My sweet Helen, have pity on me, and be my wife."

"I will; some day."

"Bless you; bless you. One effort more; what day?"

"I can't. My heart is dead."

"This day fortnight. Let me speak to your father; let him name the day."

As she made no reply, he kissed her hand devotedly, and did speak to her father. Sir Edward, meaning all for the best, said, "This day fortnight."

CHAPTER LXIX.

THE next morning came the first wedding presents from the jubilant bridegroom, who was determined to advance step by step, and give no breathing time. When Helen saw them laid out by her maid, she trembled at the consequences of not giving a plump negative to so brisk a wooer.

The second post brought two letters; one of them from Mrs. Undercliff. The other contained no words, but only a pearl of uncommon size, and pear-shaped. Helen received this at first as another wedding present, and an attempt on Arthur's part to give her a pearl as large as those she had gathered on her dear island. But, looking narrowly at the address, she saw it was not written by Arthur; and, presently, she was struck by the likeness of this pearl in shape to some of her own. She got out her pearls, laid them side by side, and began to be moved exceedingly. She had one of her instincts, and it set every fibre quivering with excitement. It was some time before she could take her eyes off the pearls, and it was with a trembling hand she opened Mrs. Undercliff's letter. That misgiving was not calculated to calm her. It ran thus:

"MY DEAR YOUNG LADY:—A person called here last night and supplied the clue. If you have the courage to know the truth, you have only to come here, and to bring your diary, and

all the letters you have received from any person or persons since you landed in England. I am yours obediently,

"JANE UNDERCLIFF."

The courage to know the truth!

This mysterious sentence affected Helen considerably. But her faith in Robert was too great to be shaken. She would not wait for the canonical hour at which young ladies go out, but put on her bonnet directly after breakfast. Early as she was, a visitor came before she could start,—Mr. Burt, the detective. She received him in the library.

Mr. Burt looked at her dress and her little bag, and said, "I'm very glad I made bold to call so early."

"You have got information of importance to communicate to me?"

"I think so, miss," and he took out his notebook. "The person you are watched by is Mr. Arthur Wardlaw." The girl stared at him. "Both spies report to him twice a day at his house in Russell Square."

"Be careful, Mr. Burt; this is a serious thing to say, and may have serious consequences."

"Well, miss, you told me you wanted to know the truth."

"Of course I want to know the truth."

"Then the truth is that you are watched by order of Mr. Wardlaw."

Burt continued his report.

"A shabby-like man called on you yesterday."

"Yes; it was Mr. Hand, Mr. Wardlaw's clerk. And oh, Mr. Burt, that wretched creature came and confessed the truth. It was he who forged the note, out of sport, and for a bet, and then was too cowardly to own it." She then detailed Hand's confession.

"His penitence comes too late," said she, with a deep sigh.

"It hasn't come yet," said Burt, dryly. "Of course my lambs followed the man. He went first to his employer, and then he went home. His name is not Hand. He is not a clerk at all, but a little actor at the Corinthian Saloon. Hand is in America; went three months ago. I ascertained that from another quarter."

"Oh goodness!" cried Helen, "what a wretched world! I can't see my way a yard for stories."

"How should you, miss? It is clear enough, for all that. Mr. Wardlaw hired this actor to pass for Hand, and tell you a lie that he thought would please you."

Helen put her hand to her brow, and thought; but her candid soul got sadly in the way of her brain. "Mr. Burt," said she, "will you go with me to Mr. Undercliff the expert?"

"With pleasure, ma'am; but let me finish my report. Last night there was something new. Your house was watched by six persons. Two were Wardlaw's, three were Burt's; but the odd man was there on his own hook; and my men could not make him out at all; but they think one of Wardlaw's men knew him; for he went off to Russell Square like the wind, and brought Mr. Wardlaw here in disguise. Now, miss, that is all; and shall I call a cab, and we'll hear Undercliff's tale?"

The cab was called, and they went to Undercliff. On the way Helen brooded; but the de-

rective eyed every man and every thing on the road with the utmost keenness.

Edward Undercliff was at work at lithographing. He received Helen cordially, nodded to Burt, and said she could not have a better assistant.

He then laid his fac-simile of the forged note on the table, with John Wardlaw's genuine writing and Penfold's indorsement. "Look at that, Mr. Burt."

Burt inspected the papers keenly.

"You know, Burt, I swore at Robert Penfold's trial that he never wrote that forged note."

"I remember," said Burt.

"The other day this lady instructed me to discover, if I could, who did write the forged note. But, unfortunately, the materials she gave me were not sufficient. But, last night, a young man dropped from the clouds, that I made sure was an agent of yours, Miss Rolleston. Under that impression I was rather unguarded, and I let him know how far we had got, and could get no farther. 'I think I can help you,' says this young man, and puts a letter on the table. Well, Mr. Burt, a glance at that letter was enough for me. It was written by the man who forged the note."

"A letter!" said Helen.

"Yes. I'll put the letter by the side of the forged note; and, if you have any eye for writing at all, you'll see at once that one hand wrote the forged note and this letter. I am also prepared to swear that the letters signed Hand are forgeries by the same person." He then coolly put upon the table the letter from Arthur Wardlaw that Helen had received on board the *Proserpine*, and was proceeding to point out the many points of resemblance between the letter and the document, when he was interrupted by a scream from Helen.

"Ah!" she cried, "he is here. Only one man in the world could have brought that letter. I left it on the island. Robert is here: he gave you that letter."

"You are right," said the expert, "and what a fool I must be! I have no eye except for handwriting. He had a beard: and such a beard!"

"It is Robert!" cried Helen, in raptures. "He is come just in time."

"In time to be arrested," said Burt. "Why, his time is not out. He'll get into trouble again."

"Oh, Heaven forbid!" cried Helen, and turned so faint she had to be laid back on a chair, and salts applied to her nostrils.

She soon came to, and cried and trembled, but prepared to defend her Robert with all a woman's wit. Burt and Undercliff were conversing in a low voice, and Burt was saying he felt sure Wardlaw's spies had detected Robert Penfold, and that Robert would be arrested and put into prison as a runaway convict. "Go to Scotland Yard this minute, Mr. Burt," said Helen, eagerly.

"What for?"

"Why, you must take the commission to arrest him. You are our friend."

Burt slapped his thigh with delight.

"That is first-rate, miss," said he: "I'll take the real felon first, you may depend. Now, Mr. Undercliff, write your report, and hand it to Miss Helen with fac-similes. It will do no harm if you make a declaration to the same effect be-

fore a magistrate. You, Miss Rolleston, keep yourself disengaged, and please don't go out. You will very likely hear from me again to-day."

He drove off, and Helen, though still greatly agitated by Robert's danger and the sense of his presence, now sat down, trembling a little, and compared Arthur's letter with the forged document. The effect of this comparison was irresistible. The expert, however, asked her for some letter of Arthur's that had never passed through Robert Penfold's hands. She gave him the short note in which he used the very words, Robert Penfold. He said he would make that note the basis of his report.

While he was writing it, Mrs. Undercliff came in, and Helen told her all. She said, "I came to the same conclusion long ago; but when you said he was to be your husband—"

"Ah," said Helen, "we women are poor creatures; we can always find some reason for running away from the truth. Now explain about the prayer-book."

"Well, miss, I felt sure he would steal it, so I made Ned produce a fac-simile. And he did steal it. What you got back was your mother's prayer-book. Of course I took care of that."

"Oh, Mrs. Undercliff," cried Helen, "do let me kiss you."

Then they had a nice little cry together, and, by the time they had done, the report was ready in duplicate.

"I'll declare this before a magistrate," said the expert, "and then I'll send it you."

At four o'clock of this eventful day, Helen got a message from Burt to say that he had orders to arrest Robert Penfold, and that she must wear a mask, and ask Mr. Wardlaw to meet her at old Mr. Penfold's at nine o'clock. But she herself must be there at half past eight without fail, and bring Undercliff's declaration and report with her, and the prayer-book, etc.

Accordingly Helen went down to old Mr. Penfold's at half past eight, and was received by Nancy Rouse, and ushered into Mr. Penfold's room; that is to say, Nancy held the door open, and, on her entering the room, shut it sharply and ran down stairs.

Helen entered the room; a man rose directly, and came to her; but it was not Michael Penfold—it was Robert. A faint scream, a heavenly sigh, and her head was on his shoulder, and her arm round his neck, and both their hearts panting as they gazed, and then clung to each other, and then gazed again with love unutterable. After a while they got sufficient composure to sit down hand in hand and compare notes. And Helen showed him their weapons of defense, the prayer-book, the expert's report, etc.

A discreet tap was heard at the door. It was Nancy Rouse. On being invited to enter, she came in and said, "Oh, Miss Helen, I've got a penitent outside, which he done it for love of me, and now he'll make a clean breast, and the fault was partly mine. Come in, Joe, and speak for yourself."

On this, Joe Wylie came in, hanging his head piteously.

"She is right, sir," said he; "I'm come to ask your pardon and the lady's. Not as I ever meant you any harm; but to destroy the ship,

it was a bad act, and I've never throve since. Nance, she have got the money. I'll give it back to the underwriters; and, if you and the lady will forgive a poor fellow that was tempted with love and money, why, I'll stand to the truth for you, though it's a bitter pill."

"I forgive you," said Robert; "and I accept your offer to serve me."

"And so do I," said Helen. "Indeed, it is not us you have wronged. But oh, I *am* glad, for Nancy's sake, that you repent."

"Miss, I'll go through fire and water for you," said Wylie, lifting up his head.

Here old Michael came in to say that Arthur Wardlaw was at the door, with a policeman.

"Show him in," said Robert.

"Oh, no, Robert!" said Helen. "He fills me with horror."

"Show him in," said Robert, gently. "Sit down, all of you."

Now Burt had not told Arthur who was in the house, so he came, rather uneasy in his mind, but still expecting only to see Helen.

Robert Penfold told Helen to face the door, and the rest to sit back; and this arrangement had not been effected one second, when Arthur came in with a lover's look, and, taking two steps into the room, saw the three men waiting to receive him. At sight of Penfold, he started, and turned pale as ashes; but, recovering himself, said: "My dearest Helen, this is indeed an unexpected pleasure. You will reconcile me to one whose worth and innocence I never doubted, and tell him I have had some little hand in clearing him." His effrontery was received in dead silence. This struck cold to his bones, and, being naturally weak, he got violent. He said. "Allow me to send a message to my servant."

He then tore a leaf out of his memorandum-book, wrote on it: "Robert Penfold is here; arrest him directly, and take him away;" and, enclosing this in an envelope, sent it out to Burt by Nancy.

Helen seated herself quietly, and said, "Mr. Wardlaw, when did Mr. Hand go to America?"

Arthur stammered out, "I don't know the exact date."

"Two or three months ago?"

"Yes."

"Then the person you sent to me to tell me that falsehood was not Mr. Hand?"

"I sent nobody."

"Oh, for shame!—for shame! Why have you set spies? Why did you make away with my prayer-book;—or what you thought was my prayer-book? Here *is* my prayer-book, that proves you had the Proserpine destroyed; and I should have lost my life but for another, whom you had done your best to destroy. Look Robert Penfold in the face, if you can."

Arthur's eyes began to waver. "I can," said he. "I never wronged him. I always lamented his misfortune."

"You were not the cause?"

"Never!—so help me Heaven!"

"Monster!" said Helen, turning away in contempt and horror.

"Oh, that is it—is it?" said Arthur, wildly. "You break faith with me for *him*? You insult me for *him*? I must bear any thing from you, for I love you; but, at least, I will sweep *him* out of the path."

He ran to the door, opened it, and there was Burt, listening. "Are you an officer?"

"Yes."

"Then arrest that man this moment: he is Robert Penfold, a convict returned before his time."

Burt came into the room, locked the door, and put the key in his pocket. "Well, sir," said he to Robert Penfold, "I know you are a quick hitter. Don't let us have a row over it this time. If you have got any thing to say, say it quiet and comfortable."

"I will go with you on one condition," said Robert. "You must take the felon as well as the martyr. This is the felon," and he laid his hand on Arthur's shoulder, who cowered under the touch at first, but soon began to act violent indignation.

"Take the ruffian away at once," he cried.

"What, before I hear what he has got to say?"

"Would you listen to him against a merchant of the city of London, a man of unblemished reputation?"

"Well, sir, you see we have got a hint that you were concerned in scuttling a ship; and that is a felony. So I think I'll just hear what he has got to say. You need not *fear* any man's tongue if you are innocent."

"Sit down, if you please, and examine these documents," said Robert Penfold. "As to the scuttling of the ship, here is the deposition of two seamen, taken on their death-bed, and witnessed by Miss Rolleston and myself."

"And that book he tried to steal," said Helen.

Robert continued: "and here is Undercliff's fac-simile of the forged note. Here are specimens of Arthur Wardlaw's handwriting, and here is Undercliff's report."

The detective ran his eye hastily over the report, which we slightly condense.

On comparing the forged note with genuine specimens of John Wardlaw's handwriting, no less than twelve deviations from his habits of writing strike the eye; and every one of these twelve deviations is a deviation into a habit of Arthur Wardlaw, which is an amount of demonstration rarely attained in cases of forgery.

1. THE CAPITAL L.—Compare in London (forged note) with the same letter in London in Wardlaw's letter.

2. THE CAPITAL D.—Compare this letter in "Date" with the same letter in "Dearest."

3. THE CAPITAL T.—Compare it in "Two" and "Tollemache."

4. The word "To"; see "To pay," in forged note and third line of letter.

5. Small "o" formed with a loop in the up-stroke.

6. The manner of finishing the letter "v."

7. Ditto the letter "w."

8. The imperfect formation of the small "a." This and the looped "o" run through the forged note and Arthur Wardlaw's letter, and are habits entirely foreign to the style of John Wardlaw.

9. See the "th" in connection.

10. Ditto the "of" in connection.

11. The incautious use of the Greek *e*. John Wardlaw never uses this *e*. Arthur Wardlaw never uses any other, apparently. The writer of the forged note began right, but at the word Robert Penfold, glided insensibly into his Greek

e, and maintained it to the end of the forgery. This looks as if he was in the habit of writing those two words.

12. Compare the words "Robert Penfold" in the forged document with the same words in the letter. The similarity is so striking, that, on these two words alone, the writer could be identified beyond a doubt.

13. Great pains was taken with the signature, and it is like John Wardlaw's writing on the surface; but go below the surface, and it is all Arthur Wardlaw.

The looped o, the small r, the l dropping below the d, the open a, are all Arthur Wardlaw's. The open loop of the final w is a still bolder deviation into A. W.'s own hand. The final flourish is a curious mistake. It is executed with skill and freedom; but the writer has made the lower line the thick one. Yet John Wardlaw never does this.

How was the deviation caused? Examine the final flourish in Arthur Wardlaw's signature. It contains one stroke only, but then that stroke is a thick one. He thought he had only to prolong his own stroke and bring it round. He did this extremely well, but missed the deeper characteristic—the thick upper stroke. This is proof of a high character: and altogether I am quite prepared to testify upon oath that the writer of the letter to Miss Rolleston, who signs himself Arthur Wardlaw, is the person who forged the promissory note.

To these twelve proofs one more was now added. Arthur Wardlaw rose, and, with his knees knocking together, said, "Don't arrest him, Burt; let him go."

"Don't let him go," cried old Penfold. "A villain! I have got the number of the notes from Benson. I can prove he bribed this poor man to destroy the ship. Don't let him go. He has ruined my poor boy."

At this Arthur Wardlaw began to shriek for mercy. "Oh Mr. Penfold," said he, "you are a father, and hate me. But think of my father. I'll say anything, do anything. I'll clear Robert Penfold at my own expense. I have lost her. She loathes me now. Have mercy on me, and let me leave the country!" He cringed and crawled so that he disarmed anger, and substituted contempt.

"Ay," said Burt. "He don't hit like you, Mr. Penfold; this is a chap that ought to have been in Newgate long ago. But take my advice; make him clear you on paper, and then let him go. I'll go down stairs awhile. I mustn't take part in compounding a felony."

"Oh yes, Robert," said Helen, "for his father's sake."

"Very well," said Robert. "Now then, reptile, take the pen, and write in your own hand, if you can."

He took the pen and wrote to dictation:—

"I, Arthur Wardlaw, confess that I forged the promissory note for £2000, and sent it to Robert Penfold, and that £1400 of it was to be for my own use, and to pay my Oxford debts. And I confess that I bribed Wylie to scuttle the ship *Proserpine* in order to cheat the underwriters."

Penfold then turned to Wylie, and asked him the true motive of this fraud.

"Why the gold was aboard the *Shannon*,"

said Wylie; "I played hanky-panky with the metals in White's store."

"Put that down," said Penfold. "Now go on."

"Make a clean breast," said Wylie. "I have. Say as how you cooked the *Proserpine's* log, and forged Hiram Hudson's writing."

"And the newspaper extracts you sent me," said Helen, "and the letters from Mr. Hand."

Arthur groaned. "Must I tell all that?" said he.

"Every word, or be indicted," said Robert Penfold, sternly.

He wrote it all down, and then sat staring stupidly. And the next thing was, he gave a loud shriek, and fell on the floor in a fit. They sprinkled water over him, and Burt conveyed him home in a cab, advising him to leave the country, but at the same time promising him not to exasperate those he had wronged so deeply, but rather to moderate them, if required. Then he gave Burt fifty guineas.

Robert Penfold, at Helen's request, went with her to Mr. Hennessy, and with the proofs of Arthur's guilt and Robert's innocence; and he undertook that the matter should go in proper form before the Secretary of State. But, somehow, it transpired that the *Proserpine* had been scuttled, and several of the underwriters wrote to the Wardlaws to threaten proceedings. Wardlaw senior returned but one answer to these gentlemen: "Bring your proofs to me at my place of business next Monday at twelve, and let me judge the case, before you go elsewhere."

"That is high and mighty," said one or two; but they conferred, and agreed to these terms, so high stood the old merchant's name.

They came; they were received with stiff courtesy. The deposition of Cooper and Welch was produced, and Wylie, kept up to the mark by Nancy, told the truth, and laid his three thousand pounds intact down on the table. "Now that is off my stomach," said he, "and I'm a man again."

"Ay, and I'll marry you next week," said Nancy.

"Well, gentlemen," said old Wardlaw, "my course seems very clear. I will undo the whole transaction, and return you your money less the premiums, but plus five per cent. interest." And this he did on the spot, for the firm was richer than ever.

When they were gone Robert Penfold came in, and said, "I hear, sir, you devote this day to repairing the wrongs done by your firm: what can you do for me?" He laid a copy of Arthur's confession before him.

The old man winced a moment where he sat, and the iron passed through his soul. It was a long time before he could speak. At last he said, "This wrong is irreparable, I fear."

Robert said nothing. Sore as his own heart was, he was not the one to strike a grand old man, struggling so bravely against dishonor.

Wardlaw senior touched his hand-bell.

"Request Mr. Penfold to step this way."

Michael Penfold came.

"Gentlemen," said the old merchant, "the house of Wardlaw exists no more. It was built on honesty, and can not survive a fraud. Wardlaw and Son were partners at will. I had decid-

ed to dissolve that partnership, wind up the accounts, and put up the shutters. But now, if you like, I will value the effects, and hand the business over to Penfold and Son on easy terms. Robert Penfold has been accused of forging John Wardlaw's name; to prove this was a calumny, I put Penfold over my door instead of Wardlaw. The city of London will understand that, gentlemen, believe me."

"Mr. Wardlaw," said Robert, "you are a just, a noble—" He could say no more.

"Ah, sir," said Michael, "if the young gentleman had only been like you!"

"Mention his name no more to me. His crime and his punishment have killed me."

"Oh," said Robert, hastily, "he shall not be punished, for your sake."

"Not be punished? It is not in your hands to decide. God has punished him. He is insane."

"Good Heavens!"

"Quite mad;—quite mad. Gentlemen, I can no longer support this interview. Send me your solicitor's address; the deeds shall be prepared. I wish the new firm success. Probity is the road to it. Good-day."

He wound up the affairs, had his name and Arthur's painted out at his own expense, and directed the painters to paint the Penfolds' in at theirs; went home to Elm-trees, and died in three days. He died lamented and honored, and Robert Penfold was much affected. He got it into his head that he had killed him with Arthur's confession, putting it before him so suddenly. "I have forgotten who said 'Vengeance is mine,'" said Robert Penfold.

The merchant priest left the office to be conducted by his father; he used the credit of the new firm to purchase a living in the Vale of Kent; and thither he retired, grateful to Providence, but not easy in his own conscience. He now accused himself of having often distrusted God, and seen his fellow-creatures in too dark a light. He turned towards religion and the care of souls.

Past suffering enlightens a man, and makes him tender; and people soon began to walk and drive considerable distances to hear the new vicar. He had a lake with a peninsula, the shape of which he altered, at a great expense, as soon as he came there. He wrote to Helen every day, and she to him. Neither could do any thing *con amore* till the post came in.

One afternoon as he was preaching with great unction, he saw a long puritanical face looking up at him with a dull expression of amazement and half irony. The stranger called on him, and began at once. "Wal, parson you are a buster, you air. You ginn it us hot,—you did. I'm darned if I ain't kinder ashamed to talk of this world's goods to a saint upon airth like you. But I never knowed a parson yet as couldn't collar the dollars."

After this preamble he announced that he had got a lease of the island from Chili, dug a lot of silver plate out of the galleon, sold ten tons of choice coral, and a ship-load of cassia and cocoa-nuts. He had then disposed of his lease to a Californian company for a large sum. And his partner's share of net profits came to £17,247 13s. 3½d. which sum he had paid to Michael, for Robert, Penfold in drafts on Baring, at thirty days after sight.

Robert shook his hand, and thanked him sincerely for his ability and probity. He staid that night at the Vicarage, and by that means fell in with another acquaintance. General Rolleston and his daughter drove down to see the Parsonage. Helen wanted to surprise Robert; and, as often happens, she surprised herself. She made him show her every thing, and so he took her on to his peninsula. Lo! the edges of it had been cut and altered, so that it presented a miniature copy of Godsend Island.

As soon as she saw this, Helen turned round with a sudden cry of love, "Oh, Robert!" and the lovers were in each other's arms.

"What could any other man ever be to me?"

"And what could any other woman ever be to me?"

They knew that before. But this miniature island made them speak out and say it. The wedding-day was fixed before she left.

Her Majesty pardoned this scholar, hero, and worthy the crime he had never committed.

Nancy Rouse took the penitent Wylie without the £3000. But old Penfold, who knew the whole story, lent the money at three per cent.; so the Wylies pay a ground-rent of £60 a year for a property which, by Mrs. Wylie's industry and judgment, is worth at least £400. She pays this very cheerfully, and appeals to Joe whether that is not better than the other way.

"Why, Joe," says she, "to a woman like me, that's afoot all day, 'tis worth sixty pounds a year to be a good sleeper; and I shouldn't be that if I had wronged my neighbor."

Arthur Wardlaw is in a private lunatic asylum, and is taken great care of. In his lucid intervals he suffers horrible distress of mind; but, though sad to see, these agonies furnish the one hope of his ultimate recovery. When not troubled by these returns of reason, he is contented enough. His favorite employment is to get Mr. Undercliff's fac-similes, and to write love-letters to Helen Rolleston, which are duly deposited in the post office of the establishment. These letters are in the handwriting of Charles I., Paoli, Lord Bacon, Alexander Pope, Lord Chesterfield, Nelson, Lord Shaftesbury, Addison, the late Duke of Wellington, and so on. And strange to say, the Greek e never appears in any of them. They are admirably like, though, of course, the matter is not always equally consistent with the characters of those personages.

Helen Rolleston married Robert Penfold. On the wedding-day, the presents were laid out, and amongst them was a silver box incrustured with coral. Female curiosity demanded that this box should be opened. Helen objected, but her bridesmaids rebelled; the whole company sided with them, and Robert smiled a careless assent. A blacksmith and carpenter were both enlisted, and with infinite difficulty the poor box was riven open.

Inside was another box, locked, but with no key. That was opened with comparative ease, and then handed to the bride. It contained nothing but Papal indulgences and rough stones, and fair throats were opened in some disappointment.

A lady, however, of more experience, examined the contents, and said that in her opinion many of them were uncut gems of great price; there were certainly a quantity of jaspers and blood-

stones, and others of no value at all. "But look at these two pearl-shaped diamonds," said she; "why, they are a little fortune! and oh!" The stone that struck this fair creature dumb was a rough ruby as big as a blackbird's egg, and of amazing depth and fire. "No lady in England," said she, "has a ruby to compare with this."

The information proved correct. The box furnished Helen with diamonds and emeralds of great thickness and quality. But the huge ruby

placed her on a level with sovereigns. She wears it now and then in London, but not often. It attracts too much attention, blazing on her fair forehead like a star, and eclipses every thing.

Well, what her ruby is amongst stones she is amongst wives. And he is worthy of her. Through much injustice, suffering, danger, and trouble they have passed to health, happiness, and peace, and that entire union of two noble hearts, in loyal friendship and wedded love, which is the truest bliss this earth affords.

THE END.